

THE ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE & MORAL COMPASSION

Carol Denise Mitchell

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The Advocate for Justice & Moral Compassion

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This is a work of nonfiction. Certain names and identifying details have been changed for narrative clarity and privacy. All events are portrayed truthfully to the best of the author's knowledge and documentation.

Printed in the United States of America.

DEDICATION

My advocacy has never been confined to courtrooms or institutions. It has moved through living rooms, private conversations, and the inner worlds of some of the most influential figures in American culture. At the center of every victory—and every lesson—is one truth: you are the person with the greatest stake in your own life.

Every challenge you face can be resolved, and each one strengthens you. Obstacles are inevitable, but they are never final. You must remain unwavering in your truth. Advocate for yourself with pride, integrity, and an unshakeable commitment to justice. I know this because I have lived it. At seventy years old—ill, in a wheelchair—I confronted a housing corporation, its COO, its VP, its General Counsel, and even the Civil Rights Department. I unraveled a breach of my private information and documented every violation piece by piece until the California Privacy Protection Agency opened a formal investigation. That moment was the fulfillment of advocacy in its purest form: truth meeting power, and truth prevailing.

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There is a profound fulfillment that comes from standing up for yourself and others—even when the opposition includes powerful institutions or the rich and famous who called on me to support their own challenges. When you enter the arena armed with truth, no force can genuinely defeat you. Justice and moral compassion are real—and they belong to everyone.

Throughout the years, my work has brought me into the lives of individuals whose legacies have shaped politics, music, sports, and global entertainment. But my journey did not begin in boardrooms or backstage corridors. It began in childhood—in the shadows of abuse, in the confusion of growing pains, and in the quiet determination to survive with my dignity intact. ***I turned trauma into armor, pain into perspective, and childhood into context rather than condemnation.*** Those early experiences shaped the advocate I would become.

It is with great pride that I present The Advocate for Justice & Moral Compassion. These encounters, victories, and reckonings were never coincidences; they were moments where advocacy, truth-telling, and humanity converged. This book is the record of that journey.

CAROL DENISE MITCHELL

Additional writing credits by Carol Denise Mitchell

2011 Readers favorite book award, African American Literature Book Club, (AALBC) <http://authors.aalbc.com/carol.htm>, September, 2006 News Letter named Mitchell, one of their “Authors You Should Know,” for her comprehensive handbook, “Your Rights,” regarding employee employment rights.

Additional Writing Credits:

2011 Award-winner what Happened to Suzy, Carlton Press, (1994). Mitchell resides in Oakland, California, where she is at work on a wide range of fascinating writing projects



Author's Note

This book was born from a moment of inspiration, but it belongs entirely to me. The Advocate is not the story of borrowed names or borrowed power—it is the story of standing on my own, carrying my own weight, and proving that my voice is enough.

I am grateful for the spark that set me on this path, but I choose to walk it free of intrusion, free of dependence, and free of compromise. What remains is my truth, my resilience, and my unwavering commitment to justice.

If this book reaches you, let it remind you that you, too, can rise without permission, without validation, and without anyone else's name attached. Strength comes from within, and freedom is the reward of claiming it.

Note: For narrative purposes, the apartment complex is referred to as South Bend throughout this memoir. The real location, Northgate Terrace, is referenced only in award attributions and official recognitions.

“I am on the trajectory to defend all my rights. No one is too big or too small in my search for fair justice.”

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At seventy, I entered a courtroom in a wheelchair—unprepared for the betrayal of the very institution that accepted my harassment case. They failed to investigate neutrally. They offered no mediation. They shared my information without consent. Their analyst let me down. I refused to remain silent. One month later, I was still fighting. I was still winning.

— Carol Denise Mitchell, *The Advocate*



Opening

No judge, no corporation, no lawyer or institution will ever control my emotional liberty. My name is Carol Denise Mitchell. I will not waver. I will confront you directly if you mock or strip me of my human rights. I might even take you to the bar! My mother was relentless, ferocious, wielding the English language like a weapon honed each day. She believed language was power, and she taught us that mastery meant survival. Every correction, every rebuke, every insistence on precision prepared us for a world that would never hand us justice willingly. That ferocity became my inheritance. It is why I document, why I confront, why I refuse silence when rights are denied.

I learned to turn icy nerves into financial gain, suffering into achievement. Everyone faces challenges; success depends on how we master nerves, anxiety, and stress. Never permit intimidation, no matter their power. Always remember: you are the victor.

This is why I wrote The Advocate. Join me—and discover that the victor is you.

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“Pain evolves into the kind of determination that will move mountains!” I am the Advocate.

Special Acknowledgement***

Carlton Press

I would like to take a moment in my new book, 'The Advocate', to express my gratitude to a publisher that enabled my first work to be archived in the nation's largest library, which serves as the primary research institution for the US Congress and the country at large. This book, born from the depths of my confinement in the 'The Dungeon,' is dedicated to Carlton Press, the New York publisher that acknowledged my voice when others failed to do so. Not a single derogatory term, unworthy character, or unpleasant scene in that book was ever removed. You embraced the narrative. You executed it with determination, that I am thriving to duplicate in the Advocate. You displayed courage. Others shrank back. 'I don't like Suzy,' remarked one publisher. My intentions were never about financial gain or contracts. I had no desire to achieve stardom, when the truth always led my way. My sole aim was to share my story to assist others. There existed a dominant figure in the publishing realm. A malevolent individual betrayed me in the medical field, ultimately becoming the predator who funded my journey. He encountered a warrior. \$14,000 in cash was a modest

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price for liberation. To hell with Random House, Harper Collins, Holloway House, and all those scoundrels. Carlton Press, that sovereign was you. In 1995, they published *What Happened to Suzy* without modifying a single word, faithfully maintaining my truth as I expressed it at the age of 23. You are fire! Carlton Press. It was your imprint that guaranteed that my testimony was cataloged in the nation's Library of Congress, ensuring its place in American literature. I had proven myself in literature. I didn't have to write another word after 'Suzy'. I am eternally thankful for your courage, professionalism, and respect for my narrative. Carlton Press provided permanence to my suffering, and in doing so, transformed it into a legacy."

What Happened to Suzy became my foundation. It was the book that bore the weight of my history and transformed it into testimony. Every nightmare, every flashback, every failed marriage, and every scar from *The Dungeon* was infused into the pages of *Suzy*. Writing it was not merely an act of survival—it was a process of transformation. It provided me with a voice, and when *Suzy* was accepted by the Library of Congress, it granted me a sense of permanence. From that foundation, I was able to rise. Through *Suzy*, I learned how to protect myself, and in the process, I also learned to protect others. The subject matter of my works is not designed for everyone; no publication can assert universal appeal. I cannot be molded by others—I am the one who shapes them. This book is not directed towards publishers, nor towards those who evaluate worth based on commercial success, family approval, or

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stylistic tastes. It is intended for those who are ready to face the truth. How did Carol Denise Mitchell arrive at this point? What strategies did she employ to endure? How is she still fighting at 70? Why? Who were her mentors? What was her upbringing like? All of this is contained within this book. The Advocate embodies my voice, my history, my legacy. Each time I review this manuscript, it feels as if Pandora's box has been opened. And with God's guidance, I reveal truths that I had not previously recognized. Each narrative possesses its own rhythm, its own intensity. Yet all are interconnected by advocacy — whether at home, in the workplace, on the streets, or within the culture. The Advocate is not a singular voice, but a multitude, and I am the conduit.

Milestones of What Happened to Suzy

1995 — Published by Carlton Press, cataloged in the Library of Congress.

2009 — Carlton Press ceased operations, but *Suzy* remained in circulation and in the national record.

2011 — Won the Readers Favorite Book Award, proving its impact even after the publisher was gone.

2023–2025 — Resale value noted at \$30–\$41.95, showing lasting recognition and collector interest.

“It is where pain began and where it ended. I gave myself the life I deserved. I am the Advocate.”

Whereas, it may appear that my mother truly loathed me, in this account, I cannot dwell on that idea. Her anger did not lead to my demise—it became my training ground. What she directed at me

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I learned to master. Her fury transformed into my armor her inconsistencies became my guiding light.

Carol Denise Mitchell's *What Happened to Suzy* (or *Suzy*) is a raw, heart-wrenching memoir of surviving intense childhood abuse, offering a powerful story of resilience, courage, and finding light from darkness, making it a deeply emotional but inspirational read about overcoming trauma and finding healing.

Key Takeaways:

Theme: True story about my life. Know that because you're getting this straight from the author's mouth. In 'The Advocate' I will take a new look at physical/psychological abuse within my large family, for it appears to have divided us in many ways. Rarely, have we come together over the years since I wrote *What Happened to Suzy*.

Tone: The book is heartbreaking, indeed and you may not get past the first three chapters. Courage and inspiration aren't always easy themes to write about, rather, it has to be the truth.

Impact: Readers confront societal issues for healing purposes. 'Suzy' is triggering. Read with objective care.

The Introduction

You're about to witness how the Advocate didn't simply appear in the courtroom—she was forged from every scar, every lesson, every betrayal.

On September 5, 2025, I distinctly recall navigating my wheelchair into the Superior Court of California, situated at the Wiley W. Manuel Courthouse, 661 Washington Street, Oakland, California. Despite the significant changes in my physical appearance, my mental faculties remained sharp. I was ready to confront whatever challenges the day had in store. As the Bailiff led six individuals into the courtroom, I was the first to make my entrance. On this day, I would be battling two formidable adversaries. The most unexpected opponent was the very entity that was meant to safeguard a 70-year-old woman. Instead, I found myself betrayed in the most insidious scheme I had ever encountered in my life. I realized that the Civil Rights Department in Sacramento had turned against me to aid my opponent rather than offer me the support I needed.

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Upon entering the courtroom, the bailiff took my name. "Mitchell?" he inquired. "That's me," I responded. "South Gate and you will proceed to arbitration. The judge does not wish to hear it. Go resolve it among yourselves!" he stated. Subsequently, Joe Lopes, the Vice President of Southgate Bend, stepped forward. "I am representing Northgate," he announced. "Follow her," he instructed, pointing at me. An hour later, arbitration was unsuccessful. Back inside the chambers, the judge was the first to leave after she unjustly postponed my small claims case to March 27, 2026. Exhausted and unwilling to consider the statutes I had cited in my claim, a few minutes prior to her leaving the courtroom, I realized I had no chance of winning my small claims case if this judge was too tired in the mind to hear me. In fact, this judge was clearly not interested in hearing my case following a discredited arbitration. "You have all of this documented here," she said with irritation. When she said that I instantly shifted into protective mode. "Do not confront her. Avoid asking questions. Be ready to fight fiercely. She then directed her attention to Mr. Mr. Lopes. "What is your response to this matter?" she inquired, her voice laced with disgust and anger. "The Civil Rights Department stated they would arrive at a decision regarding her Civil Rights case in December!" he shouted, leaving me in disbelief! I observed the opponent rummaging through his documents for a date. Did Sardenia from the Civil Rights Department set me up? How could she provide the opponent with a date that I had not received? My eyes started to sting. Internally, I had to calm myself. "Very well, I

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am rescheduling this case to March 27, 2026. Court is adjourned," this unruly judge proclaimed loudly.

"No way! She was utilizing the information supplied by the CRD to the opponent and not me!"

This book is centered on the theme of resistance and self-advocacy. It's about being a small stone that knows how to confront the giant and win. There was no way I would tremble in response to the CRD's betrayal. So, if you want more of the details on how I was betrayed by The Civil Rights Department, in Sacramento, California stay tuned. I was contending with two major industries. Following the unmistakable betrayal by Sardenia and the CRD, I realized that victory was not within my reach! At that moment, I needed to devise a strategy. I was facing this challenge alone, confined to a wheelchair, advanced in years yet sharp in intellect. Nevertheless, do not let that mislead you into thinking I am incapable of fighting. I battled and emerged triumphant. Allow me to narrate how my stories unfold. As I sit in this apartment for which I fought so diligently, I remember catching a brief glimpse of her gavel and, from the corner of my eye, I noticed Joe Lopes, the Vice President who was the recipient of the closing date that the Civil Rights Division had denied me. He was standing.

He looked at me as though I were of no value. The judge, a Hispanic woman resembling him, with dark hair dressed in that dreadful black robe, left the chamber. She walked away, believing I would scream. Despite all the struggles I have faced in my life, they

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would not elicit that response from me. Subsequently, the victor exited the room with a court date so far in the future, it might as well have been scheduled on Mars. Following him was the arbitrator, who earlier had been unable to reach a resolution. I can still hear her shouting at me: "Carol, you have the upper hand. You still have your apartment. Please sign this agreement!" she implored. She saw how the VP said the man that sexually harassed me had tenure and how they stopped cleaning the 11th floor because of my complaint. Retaliation. Spelled out in gold letters. Nobody cared! And this bitch wanted me to concede? I adjusted the right arm of my wheelchair and moved closer to the table. There, I clasped my hands together. Speaking in soft tones I announced: "I refuse to agree to relocate and I will not drop this case until justice is served. I am not fabricating my claims of sexual harassment. I will not leave this place by signing documents that I do not believe in," I stated. I remained composed, because these people didn't have a clue of the shit I had survived in this 70-years of life. I had faced bigger challenges than this one and persevered. Hear me when I declare. Racism, sexism and discrimination are alive! The people that are supposed to protect you are as fucked up as the offender! But that clearly was the unspoken strength I had against them. Carol Denise Mitchell had been in the ring more times than Muhammed Ali. She knows how to fight! The VP was enraged. The arbitrator was infuriated.

"Let us return to the courtroom for the judge to deliberate on this case," I asserted. They would certainly be displeased, as I was not prepared to agree to a settlement in this arbitration, and a

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complacent judge chose the simpler option of remanding the case for almost an entire year due to the VP's gift from the Civil Rights Department that had betrayed me. Outside of arbitration, I felt aged, frail, and dozed off in my wheelchair while waiting for the judge to reenter the chambers. However, exhaustion was insufficient to compel me to leave the tribunal. I needed to uphold my principles, as I had done throughout my life. I did not act out. I did not protest. Instead, as the final person to leave the judge's chambers, I exited with a burning resolve. Before I let Sardenia Santos and Southgate Bend to return to this courtroom and utter falsehoods about me, I would release both cases from under them as if they were atomic bombs. Neither one of these entities would ever get the chance to publicly "Clown" me!

VP Joe Lopes would endure a burning hell before I would give up my penthouse apartment! After all, I had already emerged victorious in the most crucial battle. I had requested and got the installation of cameras on eleven floors of my building, which had not been present prior to my filing of the sexual harassment case. I will always remember the date of that advocacy. "Mandy," I addressed the manager. "Yes, Carol," she responded to me. "Mandy, my neighbor Alice visited my apartment on January 29, 2025, at 1:30 P.M. She informed me that maintenance had stolen from her and that they were charging her for repairs. This is against community regulations. We require cameras on all eleven floors of this building," I stated. Mandy concurred. She recognized my commitment to advocating for seniors. The sexual harassment

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allegations had already caused her distress. This marked a notable victory.

I prevail with the truth. I have vanquished dragons in the past. As long as truth remained at the forefront, I would achieve victory once more. As I sip cold coffee in my living room this morning, I still recall September 5, 2025. None of them appeared to recognize the significance of holding the door open for me, in a wheelchair. The Civil Rights Department had betrayed me, and I bore the burden of her decision deep within my spirit. I have to write about this. For this may be the first time in history that the CRD stabbed a complainant in the back. I recall the hot tears that raced down my face as I exited the courtroom. "Are you going to be alright?" asked the guard at the door. "I looked into his eyes.

"I am just getting started," I said as I rolled my chair onto Broadway. I was fully aware of the actions I needed to take. One day, I would ensure they faced consequences for this betrayal. They would not mock or deceive me and escape without repercussions. I was merely an invalid they aimed to exclude from the premises. Nevertheless, my life experiences, suffering, and pain have strengthened my resilience. A person I cherished referred to me as "The Advocate!" I was entirely prepared! No more tears or self-pity. From start to finish, in the advocate, you will witness my true character, and I will conclude this book by demonstrating precisely how to achieve victory. I take immense pride in my integrity. I have a very low tolerance for lies. I preserved jobs through Your Rights,

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secured cameras for every level of Southgate Bend, obtained substantial settlements for others, and dismantled systems such as the outdated Pentagon Reproduction Equipment at the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board (CUIAB), which referenced master and slave, serving as a *reminder of our historical enslavement. Looking back on all those decades ago, I am proud.* I confronted Bridgeway Capital Advisors — A 51-year-old Black woman standing resolutely against the founder and four affluent partners for work rights. And then those no-good bastards wanted me to fire myself and replace myself with a white woman. I mean to tell you! I activated the green button on a BlackBerry that summoned them to my meeting. "Did you write this book?" John inquired. He was the white man my mother taught me to respect but never trust. "You're damn right I wrote that book, bastard," I replied. In that instant, I echoed my mother's command of the English language, rejecting The Dungeon where pride and privilege were reserved for only one. My experiences in The Dungeon would become my kryptonite. After that, nothing ahead of me would inflict pain, which is exactly why I caught The Civil Rights Department betrayal, in the middle of the tribunal. I had been there before. I knew what do. No matter how difficult life became for me, the struggle had to continue, and the result had to be fair and honest. Each success story in this book acts as a crucial component in the structure of advocacy: Bridgeway, South Gate, CUIAB, and The Civil Rights Department in Sacramento, California. Every injury became a testimony; every silence was transformed into a record. Advocacy is a demanding

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pursuit, and a positive outcome is never assured. It comes with ambiguity, uncertainty, stomach aches, tears, and nights filled with hopelessness; yet it is never unclear because I always fight for the truth and nothing less. The path to achieving any case or cause is rooted in honesty.

Never deceive. Never distort the truth. This is the ceremonial law of advocacy — the principle that transforms wounds into victories and successes into legacies. It is the hall of honors no one else built for me. It is the cathedral of battles fought and won, where cameras, letters, settlements, and interviews stand as proof that advocacy leaves marks not only in records and seals, but in the very walls and sidewalks where we live.

“The truth is the foundation of all my success!” I am the advocate.

Stay tuned for the Finale—

where The Advocate raised an attorney off her seat of denial,

damn near to the New York State Board of Attorneys

Where silence was shattered,

where a refrigerator became the proof,

and where one letter—YOU HAVE ONE DAY—

turned advocacy into spearheaded judgment.



CHAPTER ONE

A Fighter Is Born

Long before I even dared to take on the world, I was born as Carol Denise Coulter at 8:18 a.m. on May 12, 1955, at the Los Angeles County Osteopathic Hospital, located at 1100 N. Mission Road. My birth certificate indicated California as the state, Los Angeles as the county, and Los Angeles as the town. However, that document contained the first falsehood of my life, and my father fought vigorously to ensure that Carol Denise Coulter was never recorded in my school records. It simply was not my real name. The individual my mother identified as my father, Floyd Coulter, was false. This situation reflected the aspect of my mother that I loathed the most, as I was too young to comprehend her actions at that time. It appeared that she lied about everything, starting with my birth certificate.

Coulter was not my father. Floyd Coulter, age thirty-one, appeared on that document in place of my real father, Zebbie Thomas Charles, Sr., for reasons I will never know. The moment I

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uncovered this deception; I began advocating for the removal of Floyd Coulter from my birth certificate.

Yet within the framework of this book, when it came to my father Zebbie, I realized I didn't have to do a thing. My father had already ensured that truth would prevail. Mother never told my sister or me that we were Coulter—not until the day we tried to obtain our birth certificates. I still remember my sister calling me in my 30s and asking, *"Did your birth certificate say Charles?"*

It was at that moment we uncovered the reality: among sixteen children, only the two of us bore the name Floyd Coulter, a fact that emerged in 1954 and 1955. This may clarify, as I mentioned in *What Happened to Suzy*, why my mother was so easily detached from me and why she referred to me as Suzy instead of Carol Denise, the name recorded on my birth certificate. She obscured the truth by not informing me that my grandmother had named me Carol. Disliking the name, she refused to use it, and for 18 years, my mother and other family members called me Suzy. My mother's own deception also encompassed the fact that Floyd was awarded custody of her two sons, Ronaldo and Gerald Coulter, during a custody dispute that took place in a courtroom in Martinez, California. The so-called "kidnapped brothers" never grew up with us, yet my mother created a false narrative about our missing brothers Ronald and Gerald that stuck like glue. Marcia told us they had been abducted from the park. Somehow, my older siblings, Nola and Fred, managed to escape that alleged kidnapping—a tale

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so outrageous and bizarre that it is now apparent why her brilliance and intellect remained intact, while her emotional state was irreparably harmed and shattered. The reason I never contested the incorrect name on my birth certificate is that shortly after my birth, my biological father became my initial advocate. It was my father who insisted that my mother not perpetuate the Coulter falsehood in our school records. Officially, the state referred to me as Coulter—but that was the only context in which it ever existed. Only on that hospital document. My father was a staunch advocate for the truth, resolutely aiming to prevent any falsehood from seeping into my public records. From my time in Kindergarten, I was recognized as Charles. His support acted as my initial shield—proof that truth could prevail even when the law sought to erase it. Even during my years at Garey High School in Cypress, California, we were known as the 'Charles Sisters.' Although classmates David and Leon Lett teased us with that name, it also represented a mark of authenticity. In a newspaper clipping from the Miss Cypress Valley Pageant, I am identified as Carol Charles. In my yearbook from Garey High School, I am listed as Carol Denise Charles. These records serve as irrefutable proof: regardless of what the birth certificate stated, my true name has always been and will continue to be Carol Denise Charles. Later in my life, I discovered my brother, Ronaldo Coulter, who is an attorney in Idaho. My mother had died by then. I learned that Ronaldo practices employment law and has a distinguished career as a founding partner at Idaho Employment Law Solutions, a law firm that is both African-American and

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Veteran-owned, dedicated to providing quality and efficient legal counsel to businesses, organizations, employers, employees, and individual multicultural clients across Idaho. My brother did not let our mother's absence hinder him. I experienced a sense of pride in the individual he had evolved into and in his dedication to the United States Marine Corps. Ronaldo informed me that Floyd was nearing death in a Veterans hospital situated in San Francisco. I approached him directly and asked, "Who is my father?" He looked at me and responded, my mother's father was a full-blooded Indian. Subsequently, he mentioned that I resembled my grandmother and concluded by stating, "Zebbie Thomas Charles is your father." I am thankful that my school records were precise. The only inconsistency was my birth certificate, which lists me as Carol Denise Coulter.



CHAPTER TWO

The Matriarch

A Fighter Is Born Where others may view cruelty, I perceive a forge. The flames ignited by my mother did not annihilate me; instead, they fortified me. It was through the process of writing this book that I came to understand that my mother selected the name Suzy for me solely because she had an aversion to the name Carol. This explains why my mother was unable to kiss me. I bent down to express my dedication and affection towards her. Each time, however, I was met with a cringe. She harbored a dislike for me. My grandmother was the one who named me while my mother was in poor health. A simple alteration of my name caused my mother to genuinely loathe me, whereas my father and grandmother held me in deep affection. Their early exits from my life—my grandmother on July 17, 1965, and my father a year later, returning to Louisiana in 1966—left me to navigate life alone. This was the most arduous experience I have ever faced: to exist without the only two people in this world who ever truly loved me without conditions.

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I recall that at my father's funeral, the inscription beneath Zebbie Thomas Charles Sr. listed his children—I was present among them, not as Suzy or Coulter, but as Carol Denise Charles. That engraving serves as evidence that regardless of what the birth certificate stated, I was always his daughter. I even took the initiative to create his tribute and memorial for my family, ensuring that his legacy would not be forgotten. Although the name Coulter may be recorded on my birth certificate, it has never defined who I am. My mother may have referred to me as Suzy, but before she died, my grandmother encouraged me to embrace my true name. Carol Denise Charles is the name that propelled me forward—and it is the name I go by. Even my mother's memorial lists us all as Charles. The falsehood on my birth certificate has never defined me; the reality of my father's name has always been my true identity.

If there is anyone who has ever instilled fear in me throughout my life, it is my mother. If giants are feared for their towering stature, my mother towered a hundred feet above them. I lived in a state of constant fear of her. She frequently used profanity, akin to a sailor. Profanity was not merely her middle name; it was her first. My upbringing was characterized by a complex relationship with her, which involved a daily barrage of insults such as bitches, hos, and prostitutes. She spoke to all of her kids this way. She was the mother of sixteen children and she used each of us to her advantage in a variety of ways. My mother's heritage includes Black, Indian, and Irish ancestry. At 5'6", her skin was a rich chocolate hue, in complete contrasts to her mother who had blue eyes and opaque

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skin. Born and only child, her long, silky black hair beautifully complemented her deep black eyes, which often seemed sorrowful until she smiled. When she did smile, she brightened the world around her, although such moments were infrequent in our home. From a child's perspective, her treatment of me was harsh, as was her treatment of my father and other relatives. The worse my mother treated me, the more I loved her. Her use of profanity was a defining characteristic for many family members. The sole individual who managed to evade her harsh remarks was her mother, Nola. My mother possessed a high level of intelligence but could easily transform into a volatile figure, frequently treating my father poorly. I often felt out of place, trapped within her home. My acts of defiance were subtle, a quiet rebellion that she would never acknowledge. From an early age, I mimicked her speech and behaviors, attempting to turn all of Mother's negative traits into positives, until I ultimately convinced myself that I aspired to be like her one day. Any turmoil present in her household had to be downplayed in my mind for the sake of my own survival. Here is further insight into my perception of my mother. She had a mastery of language that I have never encountered in anyone else. When she voiced her dissatisfaction, it was evident that you had crossed her, as her articulate expressions were always accompanied by a clear rationale. On the morning when Sardenia Santos from the Civil Rights Department in Sacramento contacted me to share news of a victory; my advocacy had been acknowledged and accepted. In that instant, I embodied my mother — insightful and brave, fierce and

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steadfast yet always truthful and never mistaken. Her voice resonated within me, and through my demeanor, her cadence evolved into a testament that will echo throughout this narrative. As I reflect on my journey of being a superwoman for myself and others, it is essential to recognize that I am grounded in the legacy of an extraordinary but painful upbringing. My aim is not to exploit, but to honor — to preserve the truth as I perceived it, and to advance the Advocate's.

“Each victory, each outcome was modeled after her keen intelligence, raw truth and remarkable brilliance.” Marcia Ann Charles.



CHAPTER THREE

My Mother

DISCLAIMER

In a continued manner to understand my upbringing and how I became the advocate, the following chapter contains my personal recollections, opinions, and interpretations regarding my mother. These reflections are subjective and represent my own lived experience. They are not intended as factual accounts of events from the perspective of any other family member, nor should they be construed as statements about anyone else's character or actions. Readers are reminded that memory and perception vary, and this narrative is offered solely as part of my creative work. Any resemblance to others' experiences is coincidental and unintended.

As I continue traveling this road of self-discovery, I want to tell the world more about the woman who had me—the woman who was born on May 23, 1929 and died in 1993, leaving me feeling as if my soul had been raised from my body. She was the one who advised my eldest brother, "Take action to silence them," unaware that the "action" resulted in some of her children being forever

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affected by the turmoil known as "The Dungeon." We had the option to either succumb to the pressures or emerge more resilient from the experience; I opted for the latter! This form of confinement indeed resulted in family silence, estrangement, and premature deaths... She broke my heart and charmed me all at once. This once-grand lady has transformed into a more formidable creature. Her isolation led her to have sixteen offspring, a choice that appeared questionable—not if we were fated to be trapped in a room, reciting television commercials with our eyes closed. Not if, as I neared the end of my life, none of them could inherit my legacy. Today, I write the book from my home as a 70-year-old woman, it's scary to outlive your grandmother and your mother. Neither of them made it to 65. Mother would have been enraged had she known that after her passing in 1993, 14 out of her remaining 16 children cut off all contact from one another. We were each distanced at the foot of her grave, which was the last sight my mother ever wished to witness in her lifetime. "As siblings, it is essential that you remain united. You share a closer bond with one another than with me. You are connected by the same lineage," she expressed with sorrow. Yet, in spite of her inadvertent disregard for our well-being, she continued to be one of the most significant influences in my life. I yearned for her passion. At that time, I was too young to recognize my mother for who she truly was in *What Happened to Suzy*. Now, I perceive her in a fresh and distinct light. I desired her skill to silence creditors with just a single phrase, or to sit before a judge with the poise of a warrior determined to triumph! She instructed me on how

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to wield the English language as it was intended to be articulated. How to confront a lawyer with confidence and dignity. “You Have One More Day!” I aspired to possess her elegance and breathtaking beauty, guiding me to gleaming marble tables in boardrooms where I could exert absolute control, even as my nerves urged me to flee. Nasty and mean to me without fault, my adversary — the one person who seemed to hate me most — became the figure I envisioned whenever I marched into the decadent chambers of the elite to defend my rights or whenever I delivered the news for Soul Beat. Later, when Yusef Bey told me, “You walk like a black stallion,” I knew all of it was due to my mother’s undeniable perfect poise under fire. Her hatred gave me power. Her rejection became my strength, my resolve to stare the devil in the face and win. I turned the biggest negative I ever knew into my sole force of spiritual defense in facing my biggest challenges.

I have never really spoken at length about my mother. She was an only child, privileged, raised with advantages that seemed worlds apart from the life she later gave us. Her mother — my grandmother’s disposition was warmer and more kind than my mother. They were so different in every way that I questioned the bloodline itself. I remember that when I entered my grandmother’s charming house, which was white with blue stairs and featured a front screen door that seemed to groan each time we opened or closed it, located on Cambridge Street in West Los Angeles, there was a ten-year-old photograph of my mother displayed in a large black and white 9x10 frame atop the television. The image of her as

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a child was captivating. After I would call my mother to check if she had returned home safely, I would always pause to gaze at that black and white pre-teen photograph of my mother as an innocent young girl; her beautiful dark face and darker eyes already reflecting a hint of sadness. This photograph of my mother was captivating! Her long hair was divided in the center and elegantly braided in front of a white pinafore. I would silently ponder: "Mother, why are you so sorrowful?" That deep, penetrating gaze remained fixed on her face. I would consistently take a good look at that photograph, unable to comprehend that it was indeed Mother.

But even in that childhood image, one could sense the contradictions — beauty that drew in my father, secrets that simmered beneath the surface, and a rage that later allowed her to lie via a host of false narratives. The photo was more than memory; it was prophecy. Behind the braids and white pinafore was a woman who would charm, wound, and redefine me, leaving me to wrestle with the truth she concealed and the fortress I would one day build from her silence.



CHAPTER FOUR

MARCIA

At the age of ten, I came to understand the reason behind my fascination with that photograph of my mother. I had never truly accepted that Marcia Ann Charles was really my biological mother, because she had too many kids to notice me. Consequently, the sole evidence I possessed was the affection my mother exhibited towards her own mother. This devotion was undeniable; even when every other facet of their relationship seemed improbable, my mother exhibited calmness, sweetness, obedience, and respect in the presence of her own mother. These traits of my mother were uncommon among others. Now, it is time for you to meet my beloved grandmother.

Mamus

Mother was vituperative. Mamus was kind. Mamus, my grandmother, was the only individual who remained unaffected by the tumult of my mother's considerable anger. In the 1950s Nola worked as a domestic in the Los Angeles area for prominent

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individuals, including Gene Norman and J. Paul Getty. Additionally, she was employed by the distinguished cardiologist Dr. Myron Prinzmetal. She adored the Prinzmetal children—Byron, William, and Anita—just as much as her own grandchildren and shared numerous stories about them. The Prinzmetal children affectionately referred to her as "Gar-Gar," while her own grandchildren called her "Mamus." During her employment, she served as a cook for Debra Paget while she was working on "The Ten Commandments" and "Love Me Tender." An Elvis enthusiast, she shared this passion with my brother Fred, the creator of "The Dungeon." She was an exceptional cook and a whole lot more.

Nola Pierson (1910s–1960s) was born to Alfred Pierson and Dorothea Stephens, part of a Texas family that later migrated to Tulsa, Oklahoma around 1915. She grew up alongside her siblings, Alfred (b. 1907) and Almeda (b. 1909), in a period marked by both Southern hardship and the early stirrings of Black migration. In Tulsa, she married Douglas Jackson on June 29, 1929, and later entered a second brief marriage to Leonard Baldwin in 1942, though she continued to use the name Jackson for the rest of her life.

By the 1950s, Nola had become part of the invisible backbone of Los Angeles' elite households, working as a domestic for prominent figures including jazz impresario Gene Norman, industrial magnate J. Paul Getty, and pioneering cardiologist Dr. Myron Prinzmetal. She adored the Prinzmetal children—Byron, William, and Anita—who affectionately called her "Gar-Gar," a

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name that reflected her warmth and presence in their lives. During Hollywood's Golden Age, she served as a cook for actress Debra Paget during the filming of *The Ten Commandments* and *Love Me Tender*, and she shared an enthusiastic love of Elvis Presley with her grandson, Jimmy.

Mamus was known to have kept a gun beneath her pillow and was quite prepared to use it when necessary; however, she was also a nurturing and affectionate individual who cherished and adored her family. I remember my mother being thirty-five years old, and I was just ten, when my dear grandmother passed away at the age of fifty-one due to Myeloma bone cancer. It was the first instance in my life when I witnessed my mother appear vulnerable. She stood in the small kitchen of our apartment, overwhelmed with grief, as she answered that pink princess phone to receive the devastating news that her 51-year-old mother was dead. At the age of ten, I vividly recall how deeply I loved my mother and how much I wished to shield her from tears. I had never encountered someone crying in such a manner before. My little heart broke over seeing my mother this way. This singular moment in my life solidified my affection for my mother. From that day onward, in my youthful perspective, my mother was infallible. The sound of fire engines began to blare behind us. Mother held onto the phone. I lowered my head in pain for her. My family was gathered at Griffith Park with my eldest sister, Nola and Fred. I was in the kitchen when my mother received the call: my grandmother had passed, taken by Myeloma bone cancer. Large tears streamed heavily down my

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mother's face. I felt so sorry for Mother. This only child lost her mother. She was only thirty-five. I will never forget her uttering those words, raw and unfiltered: "My Mother is gone."

My grandmother's death on July 17, 1965 was the saddest death I ever heard of. Her passing struck like a rolling boulder, crushing everything in its path. It'd be a long time before anyone got over my grandmother's untimely demise. My brother—the one who created *The Dungeon*—locked himself in the bathroom for an entire day crying and not letting anyone in. I was only ten, and I dreamed of Mamus sitting in a chair. Each time I approached her in that dream, reaching to turn her around, I woke up before I could see her face. Mother did not let us go to her funeral, and it devastated me. "Take the kids to Griffith Park," she ordered a family memory. That was time lost that I'd never get back and I felt that exact way as a ten-year old. Nola Pierson was of mixed heritage half Irish and half Black, and at 51 she was too young to be dying. Her absence left a silence that has never stopped echoing, but it was the beginning of my advocacy and defense of my mother.



CHAPTER FIVE

MOTHER & DADDY

The passing of my grandmother profoundly transformed my mother. She no longer had the comfort of leaving us at that charming white house on Cambridge Street in West Los Angeles, California, on weekends. My mother found herself alone, with a man who could not keep a job. You had all these children. Your mother is deceased. This signifies your awakening, Marcia. You have the option to either stay in Watts and decline alongside the city or explore positive avenues to support this large family. Then, mother burst into the living room to confront my father before he could even remove his hat. "You bastard, when I leave Watts, I do not want you near any of my children. Return to Shreveport, Louisiana, and leave us in peace." She became pregnant by him, expelled him, gave birth, and eventually had ten children with my father. I held my father in great regard. His name was Zebbie Thomas Charles, Sr. Daddy stood at 5'5" and weighed no more than 150 pounds with very dark skin, thin hair, and a unique regional accent, I valued my father beyond what words can express.

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Daddy communicated in Ebonics, which is more formally recognized as African American Vernacular English. His slang was characterized by groans that omitted 'th' sounds, and his vocabulary mirrored a legacy of slavery, cultural identity, and linguistic innovation that was nuanced, allowing you to fully grasp the meaning of each word he uttered! He was a man who could neither read nor write, yet he served this nation with honor during World War II. He was a master in tolerance when it came to dealing with mother's constant bullshit. Despite his small stature, he had a vast heart, a joyful spirit, and a sense of dignity. He was a cheerful father, always smiling and finding joy even in challenging times. The years when my mother permitted him to live with us were the most cherished years of my life. Watching Daddy dance to the song 'Green Onions' by Booker T. & the M. Gs defined the Memphis soul sound. It brought joy to our home and watching Daddy dance was my favorite pastime. "Pick the cherries off the tree!" he would laugh. I would dance with my father as a little girl. "You're so funny, Daddy!" I would exclaim in delight. "That's Daddy's baby. Yes. That's Daddy's baby!" he would shout. Mother would smile from the other end of the room. She'd cook all day ham hocks, greens, using techniques from our West African, Native American, and Southern traditions, adapted during slavery. Daddy ate whole white onions and never gained a pound! Those were some of the happiest days of my life. Observing Daddy eat whole onions and watch old westerns on a black-and-white television was what I consider the good life. I recall him playing cards with my grandmother—

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Mamus—who had a deep affection for him. Her love for him was a testament to the warmth he brought into every room. Although life often took him in and out of our home, his influence on me was profound. His laughter, strength, and love continue to be my foundation. Let me tell you about my daddy.

In loving memory of my father

Though small in stature, your heart was vast; the memories of you linger on, providing direction. As I grew older, I became attentive and receptive, recognizing your struggles, and those recollections of you are cherished within my dedication to fathers akin to you. I yearn for you, Daddy. One day, I hope to mirror and embody your essence!

-CD Mitchell



CHAPTER SIX

ZEBBIE T.

My father served as my greatest source of inspiration, and I would be dishonest if I claimed that his proficiency in handling ammunition did not parallel my approach to mentally preparing myself against adversaries. He applied his skills in the streets, while I applied mine in the boardroom. My father was my muse. I already told you how he loved to dance and watch westerns and there's more. He taught me how to steady my nerves in a doctor's office when he couldn't even sign his own name. I was ten and didn't know how to pee straight. But later, these memories made me love this man so much more!

"Baby sign that for Daddy," he told me one day. My father handed me the pen and as a ten-year old I proudly wrote down his name. Whether he could read or write didn't matter to me. He was the one who taught me that confrontation starts from the heart. He equipped me for struggles that required resilience; my father instructed me on how to face reality. No street is lined with gold,

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and hard work yields results. "You aren't going to see any light lying down," my father would say. There is no judgment here, not even when my father confronted and shot a man in the back after slapping me. My father discovered ways to provide for the family when resources were scarce. He would return home with food. He was a gangster. The economic situation in Watts during 1965 was dire. The blue-collar manufacturing jobs that had brought African Americans from the South to Los Angeles during and after World War II began to move to suburban areas or leave the country in the early 1960s. Even amidst high unemployment and underemployment rates in South Central and Watts, particularly among men of my father's age, he made things happen as Black individuals faced systemic racial discrimination in hiring practices, housing, and lending, which severely restricted our household income. My father maneuvered through Watts, where the streets were beginning to deteriorate, and public services were lacking. Daddy is back home. He carries a gunny sack filled with \$100 bills. "Y'all go for what you know!" he exclaimed. A police officer entered the living room to take Daddy into custody. "We will return for your vehicle, Marcia," the officer informed my mother. "What on earth are you saying?" Mother yelled. "The vehicle is stolen. Hand over the keys," the officer commanded. "You need to secure employment, Zep!" my mother yelled, as the two white police officers forced my father into the rear seat of a police vehicle. Two days later, my father came back home with gunny sacks brimming with cash. He was resolute in not allowing the despair that triggered

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the Watts riots to hinder his ability to provide for our family. In August 1965, a routine traffic stop escalated into six days of civil disorder in South Los Angeles. Thirty-four individuals lost their lives, over 1,000 were injured, and nearly 4,000 were arrested. More than 1,000 buildings were destroyed, resulting in \$40 million in property damage. Entire blocks were engulfed in flames, and families fled in terror, bearing scars that would endure for generations. I witnessed the police drag Daddy from beneath the bed. Someone shot Daddy in the back. He survived, and when he would unwind on the living room floor, I noticed the bullet hole in my father's back! Even as a child, my heart shattered when my father entered into the conflict of the renowned Watts Riots.

In summary

The Watts riots ravaged Los Angeles, ignited by police brutality and exacerbated by years of segregation, poverty, and neglect. For six days, the city was engulfed in flames—34 lives were lost, over a thousand were injured, and thousands were detained. The riots began on August 11, 1965, just one month after my beloved grandmother died of Myeloma Bone Cancer, on July 17, 1965. The upheaval began following the arrest of Marquette Frye by a white California Highway Patrol officer on suspicion of a drunk driving situation. Things got hot when a crowd gathered, and a struggle took place between Fry's mother and police officers, leading to the rumors of police brutality spreading through the neighborhood. I recall my mother urging my father to destroy the

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stores where she had been wronged. My father followed her orders inside the smoking atmosphere of a city that burning down to the ground. The uprising inflicted profound scars on both the city and myself. While exact figures regarding the number of black families that departed from Watts following the riots are not available, it is evident that the riots, coupled with persistent economic neglect and challenges within the Los Angeles Police Department, significantly contributed to a demographic shift that occurred in the following decades, to the tune of breaking up and destroying families. During this critical time, the police exhibited extreme severity, and this situation remained unchanged two decades later when Rodney King was assaulted by LAPD officers on March 3, 1991. Many women from that period believed this was a factor in O.J. Simpson's acquittal four years later, on October 3, 1995. The verdict in the murder trial of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman was delivered on that date, concluding the highly publicized "Trial of the Century." Some jurors remarked that they had not moved past the Watts Riots or the Rodney King incident, and many believe this influenced O.J.'s acquittal.

The LAPD was simply not a trustworthy institution. Long-standing issues of systemic racial discrimination, poverty, and unemployment in Watts created an atmosphere of deep-seated distrust within the community. It was a common occurrence for an officer to enter a Black household without even taking the time to knock. The LAPD routinely harassed Black individuals without any sense of guilt. Like many other Black families, my mother left Watts

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for the Inland Empire and the high desert in search of better living conditions and opportunities. She sought training as a Licensed Vocational Nurse in Azusa and supported us in Cypress, California, located 35 miles east of Los Angeles. We fled to Cypress in the aftermath, weighed down not only by the fear of flames and sirens but also by the silence of a father who was estranged from his children. He came to visit once, driving a yellow Mustang, with the intention of taking my sister and me with him. However, after the trauma of losing Ronaldo and Gerald in the custody battle with Floyd Coulter, Mother would not allow us to go. Her fear and grief over that loss created yet another barrier between us and Daddy. The Watts uprising contributed to the separation of fathers from their homes, and the fires compelled families to make decisions that would alter their lives forever.

Overall, the Watts Riots were a response to a prolonged history of police violence, racial inequality, and severe economic hardship experienced by the Black community. "Those damn cops are killing Blacks!" I overheard my mother say to my father. "Tess, everything downtown is ablaze, baby. Watts is being reduced to ashes!" my father replied. In Los Angeles, there was also an increasing influx of immigrant labor that displaced jobs traditionally held by the Black community. Due to the persistent nature of racism, white employers favored hiring Mexicans over Blacks. This is the narrative I wish to share with you—the story of becoming, owning, and standing as the healer, even when my anxiety urged me to retreat. Shortly after my mother announced that we would not be

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renewing our lease in Watts, we would depart for good. I was unprepared for the day that would come when I would not see my father for years following the riots that forced us to flee to Cypress, California.

"A riot serves as the voice of the unheard, embodying profound frustration stemming from a lack of voice and neglect," stated *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, yet he was not present; I was. The Watts riots imparted a lesson to a ten-year-old girl named Suzy: just because the streets are ablaze before you, it does not signify the end of the world. Look beyond Watts. Perceive the possibilities that extend beyond the constraints that seek to label a community that has endured so much.

"We ain't got no lease on Watts!" yelled mother. We do not require your patronage. Open a door. Permit us to step out of Watts and into the lush greenery of more promising pastures. Observe the transformation that occurs when one woman elevates an entire family from the debris of a deteriorating town. She is 43 years old. She is resolute. She has sixteen children, and once my mother lifted us from the ashes of that wretched burning town, none of us ever returned to Watts, California, again! "Free," yet not entirely. That freedom will be realized upon our release from The Dungeon.



CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CRUCIBLE

In 1966, at the age of eleven, we departed from the Watts area immediately following the uprising, with my mother advising her friends, "Do not inform "Zep" of our destination." Subsequently, I would encounter my father only two more times throughout my life. He was never present in our home again, and circumstances were about to become chaotic. A year prior, cancer had claimed my beloved grandmother, and shortly thereafter, my older brother converted his room into a prison-like space, that I will call throughout this book The Dungeon. This period would emerge as the most frightening of my life, and upon recognizing this grim fate, managing day-to-day interactions with a monster became my initiation into the type of fear I would later harness to confront future life challenges.

The Dungeon became the crucible of my life, a place where peril and abuse were not fleeting but relentless. So long as you knew no God or anyone was going to walk in and save you, that was a

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viable way to maintain your sanity. It was an environment where a teen boy child was granted the power to dominate, to belittle, and to inadvertently destroy his subordinates to levels reminiscent of a concentration camp. I am not here to beat the dead dog as I did in “What Happened to Suzy,” rather, I am here to show you how survival shaped me into being an adult. It was in this space that my belief in God was tarnished. It was a place where the term 'can't' held significance. The dangers were cataloged in every instant: the erosion of childhood innocence, the perpetual dread of exposure, the humiliation that became habitual, and the treachery from those who ought to have been guardians. The truth of its damage resided not solely in the actions themselves but in their persistence—years of accumulated trauma that etched themselves into my identity. It was not just a single injury but rather a relentless barrage, a space filled with bruises and broken trust that taught me the language of survival long before I understood the concept of advocacy. The failure to act in cases of child abuse by our caregiver, who is in a custodial position, can lead to death, serious physical and emotional harm, as well as sexual abuse and exploitation, presenting an imminent danger. There is no Child Protective Services. It is 1966. He is like a Mack Truck that is going to inflict harm upon us. The accelerator is pressed down, racing towards destruction. The bodies lie scattered on the ground. We will all rise again. However, we will never be the same if we manage to survive the Dungeon.

Given the extensive and traumatic nature of The Dungeon, nothing that followed could ever measure up to this level of abuse.

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The betrayals that came later—whether from healthcare providers, employers, or institutions—were indeed grave, yet they appeared trivial when compared to the lasting brutality of that first childhood trauma. In a sorrowful yet undeniable way, The Dungeon prepared me for every challenge that came after. "All of you find a place on the floor. Place your hands in your laps. Close your eyes. Do not open them unless I instruct you to do so," my brother commanded. He was 17, while I was merely 11. I closed my eyes to a new reality that excluded my father and grandmother. I recall the pain I felt from my head to my eyes, in my throat and mouth. I immediately understood that to survive this ordeal, I had to adhere to the instructions, keeping in mind that eventually, this would conclude, and I would be able to take action! It taught me to process pain, to face violations, and to persist. Every encounter—Norman, Bridgeway, The Civil Rights Department betrayal, South Gate — was manageable because I had already faced the worst.

On the initial day of confinement in The Dungeon, I fixated on the door until my eyes ached, the faint light casting elongated shadows that appeared to ensnare me. We had successfully escaped Watts and the riots that devastated our former town, yet my family had merely fled the billowing smoke of one conflict to enter the persistent chaos of another. "Shut those eyes!" my brother commanded, his tone sharp enough to cut through the silence. We were arranged on the floor around his bed, our bodies creating a circle of quietude, each of us too terrified to move for fear of being struck by the heel of my brother's weapon, a shoe with a winged tip.

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The atmosphere was oppressive, saturated with the odor of sweat and the heat of bodies, denied even the solace of bathing. There would be no rescue operation, not even those damned LAPD. The only individuals capable of saving us were either deceased or absent.

In 1966 Cypress, California, continued its roles as an economic center, rooted in its history as a leader in the citrus industry, and was marked by specific events at its local institutions. Cal Poly Cypress.

Nearby Pomona, CA hosted a significant conference titled “The Dynamics of Ascent: Communist China in the World Order,” focusing on China’s rise to global prominence and its potential impact on American efforts to prevent the spread of communism in East and Southeast Asia.

The land that would become the main Cal Poly Pomona campus was at the time operating as an agriculture satellite campus, know as the Voorhis Unit. The name of Pomona derives from the Roman goddess of fruit and fruit trees, a tribute to its agricultural heritage.



CHAPTER EIGHT

DUNGEON

The Dungeon was the bedrock of my resilience, the foundation of my intolerance for suffering, and the driving force that empowered me to advocate for myself and, ultimately, for others. Nothing that has occurred in my life thus far could inflict as much pain as the early confinement in my brother's room when I was merely 11 years old. My development and deeper comprehension of the confinement in my brother's room carry profound significance for me within these pages. Those haunting experiences—trapped behind the dark walls of a room on Fowler Avenue—shaped me into the woman I am today. As a child, my understanding of The Dungeon was one perspective, which has now transformed into something entirely different. Therefore, revisiting that space is not simply a repetition; it is a revelation. It signifies the commencement of my pursuit of justice, initially for myself, and ultimately for others. To achieve a more precise understanding of my identity, it is crucial to recognize how I learned to identify the toxic consequences of abuse and how, unbeknownst to me, it

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contributed to the collapse of four marriages. Survival encompassed more than just endurance—it required an escape plan that was 7 years in the coming. It involved liberating myself from each crime scene, distancing myself from every abuser, and reclaiming my identity from the shadows they cast and it all began at 347 Fowler Avenue. Inside The Dungeon was the first room off the lanai. As soon as we got home from school we had to march directly into this punishment chamber.

The Break Down

From 1966 to 1973, The Dungeon served as my designated bootcamp for life training. It did not emerge in a vacuum; rather, it arose from sorrow, silence, and a lack of ritual. It was the most unfavorable environment for a child, yet paradoxically, it became the most effective preparation for a harsh future.

My brother Fred was only seventeen when he established it, tasked by our mother to keep her children quiet after her long shifts as a Licensed Vocational Nurse, it was on. The Matriarch of the family had to work. She didn't have time to come home to squabbling babies that required her attention. The military-like controls over all those kids' bodies created scenery similar to that of a concentration camp. The cries and wines reached no savior. The urge to go to the bathroom was often met with a smack with the heel of a wing-tip shoe. "Close those eyes. Don't open them until you're told to do so." Looking for help for answers was obsolete. To survive the long daily hours of sitting in that room took a peek

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into the future, and well beyond the Elvis Presley songs we were forced to learn and sing to our abuser, who happened to be Elvis Presley's biggest fan. One had to hope this would not go on forever. It did go on forever and long enough to become the absolute worse pain I would ever experience in my life. Anything that entered my life after the Dungeon, no matter how bad it was took a lower place behind all that went on in this degrading home environment

A Mother's Burden

One may question how this circumstance was allowed to unfold. You are already aware that my mother was strict and unyielding, and she did not tolerate any nonsense. In the 1960s, welfare transitioned from limited, means-tested assistance such as AFDC for widows, which included intrusive 'Character tests,' to more extensive, rights-based support under President Johnson's 'War on Poverty.' You simply could not have a man residing in the household. There were home inspections and social stigmas attached. When my mother learned about the National Welfare Rights Organization that emerged in 1966, she was furious. 'I cannot believe they are out there marching and protesting to be poor! Keep those crazy-ass people away from me,' Mother shouted. As welfare evolved from that small, intrusive group of social workers who opposed the presence of men in the home, my mother wanted nothing to do with the formalized rights of the poor bullshit, and she went to work, with blinders on never to look back.

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After the unforeseen death of her mother, she resolved to raise all her children on her own with the income of a nurse. The mere mention of welfare or food assistance would prompt my mother to react strongly, as illustrated by the following incident: "Mother, when I grow up, I think I want to be on welfare," my sister declared to our mother one morning. We were taking a break from The Dungeon, enjoying a breakfast of grits and eggs. Just as I was about to serve my grits onto my brother's plate, (I hate grits); I will always remember how mother stormed into the dining area. Some of the younger children were seated on the floor, while others braced themselves to return to the punishment chamber when mother took a stand. Looking disheveled from a long night of work, she confronted my sister directly. "Never utter those words again. Welfare is the last option you should ever consider!" Mother shouted. My sister quickly grabbed the pie plate she had been using and hurried from the front counter to wash it in the sink. That same sister now holds a Ph.D. in nursing.

The residence on Fowler Avenue was a three-bedroom haven in comparison to anything found in Watts. The ceilings featured brown wooden beams along with a modern popcorn finish and freshly painted white walls. The living room was expansive, boasting floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors. Outside the house, there was a basketball-sized court, along with grapevines, fruit trees, and fig plants.

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Following the Watts riots, she expelled Daddy from our home and even accused him of having an affair with his first cousin. She fabricated stories to suit her narrative. However, what mother despised the most was the welfare system and food assistance. She resented receiving handouts. Regardless of the number of children she had, mother aspired for a better life. "I don't see that we have a fucking lease on Watts!" she exclaimed as we crowded into an old Lincoln for the journey from LA to Cypress. That woman was formidable. From 1966 to 1969, Mother immersed herself in her studies to become a nurse.

Our mother worked tirelessly, completing her vocational nursing program in Azusa and passing the NCLEX-PN exam and later she worked at a nursing home making \$500.00 a month. She'd come and go as we sat on a cold floor punished viciously. Tears of frustration and pain was a constant reminder that we were trapped by a young teen who was only doing what his mother told him to do; he had no clue how much he was hurting us. Determined to raise sixteen children without welfare or food stamps, she rose early and retired late, never asking where her children were. Fred bore the burden of her request, still a child himself, and his authority inflicted irreversible damage on me that would affect me for the rest of my life.



CHAPTER NINE

SURVIVAL

Whenever I write about the travails of The Dungeon, I am asked where was CPS? Where was Child Protective Services? In Cypress, California, between 1966 and 1973, there was no such intervention. As children we were trying to be good so mother could work and come home and go to sleep without any interruptions. We were left to endure conditions that silenced us, shaped by Fred's longing to be white, his role models drawn from Elvis Presley and Bobby Sherman rather than Black figures. The Dungeon became a prison of silence, where fear replaced family and pain was an expectation. For eight years of my formative life, there was not one thing I could do about The Dungeon.

The Birth of My Soul

In silence, my voice began to take shape. It was the same voice from 1966-2025 that would tell the arbitrator no. I learned to listen, to persevere, and to envision a reality where truth could pierce falsehoods. This was a gift I would cherish for the rest of my life.

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Relief came only in fragments — the mornings we walked to school, or the moments when my sister called us to eat. Even food served in pie pans on the floor carried the taste of survival and love. Mother could not be disturbed when she was working or sleeping.

Loss and Grief

Fred wielded both the shoe and the whip. He exhibited little patience for colloquial language associated with the ghetto. He perceived himself as white. If an item cost one cent and you referred to it as cents, it was time for "licks." A lick represented a punishment administered with his wing-tip shoe, transforming each lick into a medal, with every scar symbolizing my resilience until pain ceased to be a concern. It's why I withhold anger at betrayals that should have had me screaming!

"Didn't I tell you a cent is a cent not cents!" he screamed. He was not a monster by nature; he too was engulfed by grief. He was given orders by a woman who was trying to situate a better life for her many, many kids. I recall him isolating himself in the bathroom after Mamus's death, overwhelmed by his sorrow. Years later, he conveyed his regret: "Suzy, I never meant to inflict pain upon you in the Dungeon. He apologized. "I had to protect you so that mother could find peace after work," he moaned. I was uncertain of what else to do."

The Training Grounds of Advocacy

By the age of 16, I was acutely aware of my position on the cold floor in The Dungeon. I had mastered the art of closing my eyes on command and keeping them shut until it was my turn to speak, yet I never acclimated to the anguish and suffering that accompanied my time in The Dungeon. However, I used it to make me stronger. I had memorized all the Elvis songs I was required to perform. I also understood that, without warning, I could be forcefully struck against my kneecaps by the heel of Fred's wingtip shoe. I recognized my mother's instability. Fred was also unhinged. I realized that nothing after this ordeal would ever shake me again in life. I understood that The Dungeon would not endure indefinitely. Each directive — to raise my hand for a bathroom break, to return after eating — served as a reminder of my confinement but also fortified my resolve. "Nobody's coming to rescue me," I acknowledged. Thus, I made a vow: if I ever managed to escape, I would ensure that no child would endure such suffering again.



CHAPTER TEN

TESTIMONY

Time has a way of healing wounds, and forgiveness propels us onward. Fred, who also served this nation in the US Army during the Vietnam War, was both an enforcer and a victim, a brother and a jailer. In the end, he is my brother. The Dungeon served as the crucible where my advocacy originated — not within a courtroom or upon a stage, but on the linoleum floor, amidst silence and fear. One of the most sorrowful moments of my life occurred when I escaped The Dungeon to inform my mother, only to find her exhausted from work, snoring on her bed. She had unwittingly entrusted us to a monster. Had she been aware, there was little she could have done to change it. This history transcends mere memory; it stands as testimony. It elucidates the necessity of advocacy, the imperative for systems to safeguard the vulnerable, and the importance of always voicing the truth.

Summary:

CAROL DENISE MITCHELL

My brother was an accidental tyrant—following orders from another tyrant. Two tyrants. One little Black girl. And a family fractured forever by those experiences. Survival meant recognizing the wrongs and learning how to eradicate them, however they appeared.

My decree was unequivocal: If I could endure my mother's harsh household, the biting falsehoods inscribed on my birth certificate, and the harshness of my upbringing, then no judge, no corporation, nor any institution in the world would ever again take control of my emotional liberty. My name is Carol Denise Mitchell. I will not waver. I will confront you directly if you ever mock or strip me of my human rights. I would enter the world resolved to realign a derailed train. My father initiated that journey by insisting that my education reflect my true name. My grandmother confirmed it upon her passing, leaving me with the reality of my identity: Carol. My mother solidified it through her resolve to raise her children independently, regardless of the challenges or repercussions.

Therefore, moving forward in life—fuck it—I was going to be a force. Embarrassment? Hell. Doubt? You can't do it? I would plow through all of that. No matter the situation, no one would ever control me again.

From the lies on my birth certificate to the linoleum floor of The Dungeon, from the corridors of *South Gate to the boardrooms of CULAB and the betrayal of The Civil Rights Department and beyond, my intolerance for injustice was never a choice—it was ingrained. That is why I place*

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Daddy, my grandmother, Bey, and Johnson and even my mother in the same pantheon: each carried my truth forward when silence tried to erase it.

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.,



CHAPTER ELEVEN

BOOTED

I was expelled onto the streets of Cypress, California by my mother, just one night before my eighteenth birthday. To be frank, it turned out to be one of the most pivotal days of my life and the best thing to happen to me at this time. In the subsequent four years, I faced the harsh realities of the world mother and Fred had hidden from me. From dancing in clubs to serving food in family restaurants, I took on various jobs and found a sense of peace in my departure from my mother's home. Being yelled at became an expectation. My elbows and knees were permanently wounded via being hit with the wing-tip shoe. Getting knives in your back meant pulling them out and moving forward. With Fred deployed in Vietnam, my mother was required to oversee a sizable household independently, as Fred remained obligated to her by sending a monthly allotment check. She devised new and creative methods to sustain her family following the total disassembly of The Dungeon. One look from me, she knew I was not about locking nobody up in a stank room all day. I was happy

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to be freed from such an obligation. Once Fred departed for service, no one was interested in taking his position.

Four years after I had left The Dungeon, I became a parent to a two-year-old son, by an older man who rescued me from the streets of Cypress Valley and disappeared, leaving me impregnated with his child. I was getting ready to move from Southern California to Northern California, starting a new chapter in my life, thinking that would free me of the nightmares. I would never permit the occurrences in The Dungeon govern my life; but there were just some bruises that had to heal in time. Adjustments would be necessary, and through the lessons I learned, I was determined that I had the will and strength to manage the pressures in my life much more effectively after enduring eight years in such a high-pressure living environment. While lying on the floor during the 'girls' punishment,' choking on my own tears, Fred commanded me to raise one leg into the air. 'Place those hands in front of you. Lock them above your head. Maintain that position!' he shouted. I recall how I wept from deep within until my chest trembled. Whines became screeches that turned into screams.

“Be quiet or you will be on that floor for the rest of your life!” he screamed. Feeling hurt and embarrassed that he would see beneath my dress, I could never express enough how such torment affected, shaped, and defined me for some of the most crucial challenges of my life.

CAROL DENISE MITCHELL

I remember the liberation I felt when departing from Cypress. I secured my two-year-old son in the new vehicle I had purchased with my earnings as a waitress. Taking a deep breath, I acknowledged that San Francisco lay 500 miles ahead. This distance was sufficient to distance myself from the fear and to leave the painful memories behind. From this point forward, no authority figure would be able to violate my human rights or those of others in my vicinity. I would become a solitary force, akin to a rocket ship, to guarantee that I received the fairness and respect that had eluded me in The Dungeon.

Leaving Cypress in search of a new town and a fresh approach to raising my family was exactly what I required at that moment, and I am grateful to my mother for introducing me to her boyfriend's sister, Joanne. I journeyed to San Francisco, experiencing the strong winds characteristic of this blustery city on a chilly evening. This was not Chicago; this was San Francisco, California—a lively, hilly metropolis renowned for its iconic landmarks such as the Golden Gate Bridge, its diverse neighborhoods, technological advancements, progressive culture, steep inclines, cable cars, and its distinctive culinary scene featuring sushi burritos, a thriving coffee culture, and a significant hub for the LGBTQ community. In order to meet my new roommate, Joanne, I needed to travel down the coast to Hunter's Point. This area was a disadvantaged community, predominantly African American, that

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had become a segregated ghetto as a result of racial discrimination and real estate practices. Joanne's residence was located in a dimly lit part of the neighborhood, far removed from Market Street. Her building, originally constructed as temporary housing for World War II shipyard workers, was in a state of disrepair, lacking proper lighting and maintenance. The roofs leaked, the plumbing was decaying, and rats scurried through the streets as if they owned them. Inside, I was shocked by the multitude of cockroaches crawling up her walls; she was engaged in a relentless struggle against them, armed only with a spoon and a determined look. "You must be Suzy!" She exclaimed as I sat at the table. With my two-year-old son, Shuun, perched on my lap, I returned her smile. "I am Carol Denise," I replied. "Junior mentioned that they call you Suzy!" she insisted. "I appreciate the offer of a potential room, but we will manage just fine," I stated, after Shuun laughed when the dead roaches fell into the spaghetti. After a brief introduction, I lifted my little boy onto my hip and swiftly exited Joanne's roach-infested abode. I had not heard "Suzy" in a minute. I'd be damned if I stuck around to hear that name again! Shuun and I subsequently found a comfortable hotel room to accommodate us until I could arrange for permanent housing.



CHAPTER TWELVE

BAY AREA

Two months after I arrived in the Northern Bay Area and secured housing, Elvis Presley passed away on August 16, 1977. Because I had a child, it was easy for me to secure a two-bedroom flat on Alemany Boulevard, a newer housing complex. I was 22 the single mother of an adorable two-year old son name Shuun. With my two-year-old son sleeping next to me, it was difficult to accept that Elvis Presley had also been released from this world. During my time in The Dungeon, Elvis was a constant figure in my life. He was the favorite artist of my oldest brother. Born on January 8, 1935, Elvis Aaron Presley is widely regarded as one of the most culturally significant individuals of the 20th century. He was only 42 years old at the time of his passing. Once again, I found myself transported to the singing requirements in Fred's prison, where failing to hit a note in an Elvis song would lead to additional punishment for either the girls or the boys. On August 16, 1977, Presley was supposed to take an evening flight from Memphis to Portland, Maine, to begin a tour. According to news reports that afternoon, his fiancée, Ginger Alden, discovered him unresponsive

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on the bathroom floor of his Graceland mansion. Efforts to revive him were unsuccessful, and he was declared dead at Baptist Memorial Hospital at 3:30 PM, having been only 42 years old. President Carter issued a statement, expressing that the world was heartbroken by Elvis's death, but no one felt the loss more profoundly than his most devoted fan, who happened to be my own brother. I recall those moments when Fred would style his hair and put on some tight pants and sing like Elvis. In The Dungeon, he truly embodied Elvis. He could execute that signature leg moves, and his impersonations of Elvis were among the few bright moments during my time in The Dungeon. From 'Blue Suede Shoes' to 'Crawfish,' Fred and his small group were well-versed in all of Elvis's songs. I called home to learn that Fred had struggled to cope with Elvis's death. Elvis was his idol. He was serving in the United States Army, where he received all the support he needed from his fellow soldiers. In June 1977, I left The Dungeon behind, putting aside all the painful memories associated with it, and made my way to Northern California, in time to say goodbye to Elvis Presley.

Between 1984 and 1988, while I served in the Office of the President at UC Berkeley, I was a single parent to two boys, 9 and 2 who gradually began to grasp the magnitude of my efforts to provide them with a stable life. This undertaking compelled me to endure pain in order to create a sense of normalcy that I had never personally known. My troubled mind frequently obstructed my capacity to sustain relationships long enough to forgive ordinary human errors. "What did you say?" I would yell at my son's father.

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"I will not accept that!" I would respond. I never permitted a man the chance to inflict physical or emotional harm upon me before I promptly exited the relationship, a reaction stemming from the trauma I suffered in my brother's punishment chamber. In my late 20s I sought and received counseling from Sawyer Norman, one of the best psychologists in his field. Notwithstanding, nightmares of my grandmother seated in a chair with her back turned and the hope that my father would appear at school to rescue us continued to haunt me into my 20s. It was not until I was sexually abused by the very doctor, I had sought out to assist me with the torment I endured for eight years in The Dungeon that I began to connect the dots of this theme of Post Traumatic Trauma. PTSD is a mental health condition that developed after eight years of experiencing and witnessing traumatic events during my internment in my brother's punishment chamber. Still in shock and suffering from battle fatigue, my nightmares and nervous breakdowns disrupted all my relationships, and I worked diligently to suppress the intrusive memories and unwanted occurrences that took place daily in that room. Raising my children served as a reminder to steer clear of thoughts, feelings, or family members that evoked memories of all the trauma. Moving 500 miles away from Cypress was a great start. I truly had to safeguard myself, feeling that no one could be trusted; I was irritable all the time, yet I refused to dull the pain with drugs or alcohol because I felt an intense need to remain vigilant to ensure I managed everything related to my well-being and that of my two children. I worked well on my job at The University of California

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Berkeley. Ironically, I longed to emulate some of the very individuals I was tasked with keeping away from the University. One day, activists like Martin Sheen—renowned for his history of disruption and advocacy—arrived, and the directive was clear: “Carol, when Martin Sheen arrives, you and Dean must redirect his traffic away from University Avenue and the Office of the President, so he doesn’t disrupt the campus.” As the lead security team member, I was more of a fan than a controller when it came to Martin Sheen. He was at that time one of the greatest actors of our times. His distinguished career had spanned for over more than 60 years in movies like “The War at Home,” “The Dead Zone,” according to “Fiction Horizon.com” Martin Sheen is well respected amongst his peers. Moreover, he is well known for his philanthropy and social and political views. Therefore, seeing Martin Sheen marching down University Avenue arm in arm with fellow protestors was surreal. I had watched so many of his and Al Pacino’s movies, and now here he was, in front of me, leading a protest. When Dean stood in front of me on University Avenue and told me, “Tell Sheen to take that shit up to Shattuck and turn left towards Oakland, California,” I nearly shit my pants. As I stood fully uniformed in the blue and white University outfit I literally began shaking as Sheen and his crowd edged closer to our offices. I was terrified at the thought of telling Martin Sheen to pipe it down. Yet in that moment, I knew that leaving Cypress and coming to the Bay Area had placed me in fertile ground—ground where my own advocacy for the poor and disenfranchised could take root.

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Of course, little ole me wasn't about to lecture Martin Sheen. Instead, I slipped off my coat, revealed my badge, and managed to tell him to move it along with a huge smile on my face. I recall wanting to be like him. Pick up a cause and fight, fight, fight. Helping others. While all of that was bound to happen, making a difference was driving me towards doing some cool things. That encounter stayed with me—it was proof that activism was alive in Berkeley, and that I was standing at the threshold of my own advocate destiny. Martin was proud to lead the battle for social freedom. His hair was dirty. His clothes were cheap. This was the outfit of freedom. I knew I'd be there one day.

I was ever so grateful to my mother for asking my boss, Beverly McDonald, to hire me permanently. Recently divorced, from my second son's father, it was exactly the push I needed at the time. I hadn't communicated with my family for years after escaping The Dungeon, but what I always knew about my mother was her unchallenged cadence in speech. No one possessed the wealth of diction or the ability to wield it like she did. I trusted that if she had one chance to speak to my boss at UC, Beverly McDonald, the promise of permanent hiring at UC would be fulfilled and I could therefore give my sons the beautiful life they deserved.

Indeed, shortly after my mother conversed with Beverly, she entered the lobby where I was responsible for checking employees in and out of the building. "I had a discussion with your mother. You didn't mention that you were Miss Congeniality 1973. We have

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the correct individual here. Please come by tomorrow to complete your official paperwork for the Office of the President," she remarked. I must say, my mother truly came through for me. This was the first instance it had ever occurred, and the timing could not have been more perfect. I had a history of failed marriages and relationships, I was raising two sons on my own, and I harbored a determination within me that would one day make me as influential as Martin Sheen. I had been attending therapy to address my childhood trauma. I was doing everything possible to strengthen my mental resilience for myself and for my two children. My mother had a way of intimidating me that no one else could replicate. Her voice possessed a rhythm that could silence entire rooms, and her choice of words was never to be doubted. Even after I had escaped The Dungeon and distanced myself from my family, I was aware that when she spoke, people paid attention. That was her gift, her weapon, her brilliance. It was this very brilliance that ensured my permanent employment at UC Berkeley. While I may have feared her, I had complete faith in her intellect. When she communicated with Beverly McDonald, the result was predetermined. My mother's words unlocked opportunities that my badge alone could never reach. Her intervention was both clever and remarkable, signifying the crucial moment that rooted me in the fertile ground of Berkeley's activism.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

FUZZY

On October 21 1991, I was 37 years old when I received a call from one of my sisters that another brother of mine who grew up with me in The Dungeon had died. Lack of guidance and the loss of our father landed my brother in jail. Upon his release he was beaten with a baseball bat and died. Fuzzy had served in the United States Army. Out of school he was a licensed beautician. Zebbie Thomas (Fuzzy) Charles was loved by my family and I recall how in the early 80s Fuzzy was intent on my coming home.

"You must not allow the Dungeon to distance you from your family, Suzy," he would say. If anyone had the ability to unite my family, it was Fuzzy. His passing left me deeply hurt. I would stroll around Lake Merritt Lagoon in Oakland, California. This is the location I have expressed to my family that I wish to be laid to rest after my death. Lake Merritt is a 150-acre tidal lagoon situated in the heart of Oakland, California, renowned for its wildlife and has

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consistently been a favored urban park featuring a 3-4-mile, path suitable for walking, running, and cycling, along with attractions such as Lakeside Park, a bird sanctuary, and Fairyland. I wept uncontrollably as I traversed the heart-shaped shoreline, pondering how, had we been raised in a secure environment, I would not have lost two brothers before reaching the age of 40. After all the tears, there was only one thing that brought a smile to my face as I grieved the untimely death of my brother, who was merely 36 when he passed away. Fuzzy had a strong aversion to mixed vegetables. "I despise these things. Why does mother always place this on my plate?" he lamented. "I will eat them!" I shouted, eliciting laughter from my brother. He possessed an extraordinary gift for dancing and enjoyed inviting me to join him on the dance floor. As a certified beautician, my brother took pleasure in using my sister and me as models for his clientele. His hairstyles were eccentric, vibrant, and ahead of their time. "Girl, this is a disaster," my sister remarked to me. "Do I appear as wild as you do?" I inquired of my sister, eliciting her laughter. Fuzzy believed these extravagant hairstyles were appealing, and my sister and I complied for our brother's sake. Fuzzy bore a resemblance to the singer Bobby Brown. My brother is deeply missed. He left behind a wife, a young son, and many brothers and sisters who grieve his loss.

My mother was an imposing presence. Yet, she managed to carve out a space of love in my heart, despite her stern demeanor and what other's may have perceived her to be. Among all of my mother's children, I possessed the greatest insight into her character.

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I remember how my elder sister scolded me for having this affection for our mother. "She is indulged. She had no siblings and received everything she desired in life. You continue to cling to her as you do, 'Suzy,'" she said, using my nickname, "And, you will regret it!" she concluded. I observed my mother's weaknesses. I comprehended her suffering well enough to realize that she did not wish to be the harsh person she appeared to be to others. To me, she was defined by her resilience and a type of mental illness that went undiagnosed and somehow, some way, I was resolved to change this one day. After slavery, Black individuals often avoided seeking medical help due to systemic racism, financial barriers, and a deep-seated mistrust of white medical institutions.

Boils became knots, deep scratches became infect wounds and hope became tolerance. Throughout and subsequent to slavery, Black people were subjected to medical experimentation without their consent or anesthesia. My mother endured the most severe, unmedicated form of mental suffering I have ever witnessed. I observed her clutching the sides of her head while cradling the baby who was resting on her lap. "I will take the baby, mother. You should rest," I suggested. My mother gazed at me with tears in her eyes. She entrusted me with the baby and proceeded to her bed. By 1993, my mother had experienced the loss of two sons. Victor and Fuzzy were no longer with us. At the age of 63, her heart could no longer endure the pain. She left Watts to make a better life for her family. She succeeded to the best of her ability. My mother passed away in 1993, leaving me with a complex array of emotions, as I was

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completely unable to accept this loss. I was immersed into the process of writing a book. I had hoped she'd live long enough to read it. I wanted her to know all that took place in *The Dungeon*. Despite the difficulties of growing up in her household, all of her children achieved success—earning Ph.Ds., becoming writers, nurses, or attorneys. Her resilience, even amidst challenges, acted as a subtle inspiration for my own desire to succeed in the boardroom and beyond. Regardless of her opinions regarding my upbringing in South Central and subsequently in Cypress, she significantly influenced my life. Although she was not present every day, during critical moments, she stood up for me—helping me grasp the importance of fundamental values and motivating me to seize my chances for success, even in the Miss Cypress Valley Pageant. I was 39 years old when the call arrived. I entered my two-bedroom apartment on East 24th Street in Oakland, California, weary from a long workday. Clad impeccably in a beige pleated two-piece suit paired with matching bone Bandolino heels, I noticed the phone blinking. A message awaited. First, I checked on my sons who were playing in their room. "Hi Mommy!" they exclaimed, embracing me. I returned their hugs. "Keep the noise down," I instructed. I then walked back to the living room to answer the call. "Suzy, Mother passed away today." That was the message my sister Ann left on my answering machine. Upon hearing it, I instructed my sons to go to their room. Then, I broke down. I experienced one of the most significant nervous breakdowns of my life. I literally was very close to my mother. I didn't know how I was going to live without her. I

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had spoken to her just days earlier. In my sorrow, I begged God to bring her back for just ten minutes. Then I recalled The Dungeon. I was reminded that God was not on my radar. I got madder and dismantled the living room until my sons emerged, enveloping me in their embrace, providing the solace I so urgently required. It was 1965. I remembered being ten years old, watching my mother receive the same call about her own mother's death. Now I mirrored her pain, carrying it in my body. I left Northern California for San Bernardino, where her cold body had been placed in the morgue. I demanded to see her. They wheeled her in on a steel slat, into a cold room. As I stood there, a weight rose up out of me, a force I could not control, revealing just how much this woman meant to me. I leaned down to say goodbye.

“Rest in peace Mother.”

Her death became a turning point. In that moment, I understood that grief could either destroy me or sharpen me. I chose the latter. Born during the stock market crash and great depression of the 1920's, the strength she showed in her own battles became the foundation of my future resolve. A year prior to her death, she helped me advocate for Civil Rights against the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board. When I later stood in boardrooms, demanding fairness, or sat in law libraries translating statutes into plain language, I carried her voice and image with me. She taught me that dignity is worth fighting for, even when the fight feels unbearable.

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That is why I wrote *Your Rights: What Employers Do Not Want You to Know*. My advocacy was not born in theory—it was born in loss, in resilience, and in the legacy of a mother who had no time once to go to a doctor for her own mental health needs. Rather, she who showed me that even imperfect love can ignite a relentless pursuit of justice, makes me forever proud.

My Mother

The onus on you as a mother was measured by
Your presence. Your stern disposition built a machine in me that
would function well because of your grace. Your hard work was
appreciated above the mental challenges that besieged you and
Marred your happiness all through your life, thank you my dearest
mother. Someone I truly loved and respected. Rest in Peace.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Discover

As I grew up, I was aware that my mother longed to reunite with her 3rd and 4th born: Ronaldo and Gerald. The false narrative she created to convince us that their absence was not her responsibility had lost its significance for me. My priority became finding Ronaldo and Gerald to inform them of our mother's passing. She cherished them, and the circumstances surrounding this separation had devastated Marcia. Consequently, following her death, I embarked on a quest to locate my brothers, beginning in Martinez, California via court records that told the truth about their separation from my mother. In the late 1990s, during a time when technology began to permeate daily life, I successfully found Ronaldo Coulter. The name listed on my birth certificate—Floyd Coulter—was indeed his biological father. I encountered an exceptional lawyer from Idaho, and the first question Ronaldo posed to me was why our mother had never sought him or Gerald. It was the most heartbreaking question I had ever encountered. We began to develop a friendship. He took me to the San Francisco VA

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hospital to confront Floyd Coulter about my birth certificate, and later, Ronaldo edited my second book *Your Rights: What Employers Do Not Want You to Know*. Ronaldo Coulter was the attorney that tagged 'Your Rights' as "*A Gift to the American Worker!*"

When I encountered Ron, I saw her likeness in him—it was striking how much he mirrored her features. Of all my mother's children, Ronaldo Coulter looked the most like Mother. I recalled how she wept for them. She fabricated stories about them to comfort her own heart. Regardless of the reasons behind the loss of Ronaldo and Gerald, she fought fiercely to keep the rest of us united. Who could have foreseen that one day I would discover them? Who could have predicted that I would find myself sitting across from the son my mother cherished deeply? That is the reason she retained Floyd's name on the birth certificate. May she rest in peace, forever.

Tribute: Attorney: Biography Ronaldo Coulter

Licensed for 37-years, my brother Ronaldo Arthur Coulter is a lawyer practicing civil practice, labor and employment, civil rights. Ronaldo received an M.A. degree from Chapman College in 1980. Ronaldo practices at Camacho Mendoza Coulter Law Group PLLC in Eagle, ID. In 2017 Ronaldo was a candidate for the Idaho Supreme Court. My mother never got the chance to see Ronaldo or Gerald again since their childhood. I know they have made her proud.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

MALPRACTICE

Dr. Sawyer Norman, this woman has a message for you. You despicable individual. You took commendable actions and significant outcomes and tried to erase it all through avarice and desire over a spirit that relied on you. You have let yourself down, sir. You will never let me down! "You cannot take my heart. You are unable to own my soul. If you were to pinch me, I would not respond. If you were to insult me, I would remain undisturbed. I thought I could trust you as my doctor. No one can cause me pain any longer. I have moved past suffering, burning tears, and fear in The Dungeon. Nothing can harm me again. Regardless of how hard you attempt. Deprive me of my dignity. Show me no regard. I am strengthened by the rigorous training of eight years of oppression! I am the advocate!

By 1994, I had been undergoing therapy with Dr. Sawyer Norman for almost ten years. From 1984 to 1994, Sawyer Norman proved to be an exceptional doctor. He seemed trustworthy,

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effective, and possessed a remarkable blend of formal qualifications, ethical integrity, excellent interpersonal skills, and a pleasant professional demeanor. At around 65 he held both a Master's and a Doctorate degree from accredited institutions and maintained current state licensure, having met the stringent educational standards and being well-regarded for his healing techniques. His office situated on 14th Street in Oakland, California, was designed in light beige and peach colors for comfort. The layout promoted a sense of safety, with comfortable soft beige leather furniture soft lights that resembled a home den or private office. Only the soft noises of cars traveling East to Jack London Square, provided more calming sounds to this setting. For many years the ambience in his office reflected a reassuring warmth that was neutral and all the more inviting to help calm and build my confidence. For a decade, Norman adhered to strict ethical principles akin to those established by the American Psychological Association (APA) and other regulatory bodies in his field. Our doctor-patient relationship was confidential, and he was my primary resource for work excuses when needed them and the healing he had done on me was incomparable. I was under the impression that Dr. Norman had a sufficient understanding of my background to exhibit cultural competence, as he appeared to comprehend the fundamental competencies required in his field. Regrettably, my evaluation was accurate; this physician was indeed privileged and demonstrated a lack of self-awareness. Dr. Norman thought he was better than me. I was correct in my intuition that he possessed social biases, and I

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was not wrong in my belief that these elements would interfere with Therapeutic process. My admiration for him was primarily based on the positive changes I experienced in myself following our sessions in The Dungeon. He initially built a solid foundation of trust with me, only to later undermine it. He was the individual who penned the foreword for my book, "What Happened to Suzy," which was published by Geneva Book Carlton Press Corp., New York, NY.

Throughout my sessions with Norman, the concept of being a victim was not one I accepted, especially after Dr. Norman failed to uphold his medical oath following a decade of therapy. If Carol Denise Mitchell could endure confinement and survive the trauma within, there was no way a manipulative psychologist could destroy my ability to heal and advocate for myself. Psychiatrists must consistently acknowledge the impact of their actions on the doctor-patient relationship and, consequently, on the well-being of the patient. I was taken aback as the sessions began to stray from the norm, yet there was no opportunity for this disturbed doctor to position himself in my life as a source of victimization. The doctor viewed me differently when he proposed that engaging in sexual relations with him would alleviate my experiences of childhood abuse. "What are you talking about?" I inquired. "Carol, I've done everything I can for you in this office, and I can do more if we sleep together," he astonished me. By that point, we had become friends. I trusted him too much to question his motives. His guidance was beneficial to me. I no longer challenged men. My self-esteem was soaring. What on earth was this man doing? "I have arranged for us

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to meet at a hotel in Alameda,” he stated, handing me the card. Numb, I placed my trust in him. I entered the car. Silently, I observed him secure a room. I was on the verge of being violated by someone I had trusted. There was no way to manage the situation. I couldn’t say yes. I couldn’t say no. All the doctor’s excuses would vanish. I wouldn’t be able to easily take time off work. I had to go through with this. It was the last thing I wanted to do. “Get out of the car,” he commanded. Stunned, I exited the vehicle. I followed him into the seedy motel. That is where my memory ceased.

It was clear that he lacked professionalism, as he consistently voiced his wish to engage in sexual relations with me. Who did Dr. Norman think he was deceiving? You are a physician! Surely, you comprehend that such an invasion of my mental well-being could cause irreparable harm. Allow me to explain the consequences when a psychologist oversteps boundaries with a patient. His sexual involvement with a client constitutes a grave ethical breach, resulting in significant psychological harm comparable to trauma from incest or rape, which can lead to PTSD, severe depression, anxiety, identity confusion, shame, guilt, isolation, mistrust, self-blame, flashbacks, and potential self-harm, often referred to as 'Therapist-Patient Sex Syndrome.' This behavior undermines the client’s autonomy and trust in others. While the DSM Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders does not categorize a specific 'DSM-3 damage' classification for this, it has been noted that the repercussions align with established diagnoses such as PTSD, Major Depressive

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Disorder, and Complex PTSD, which involve intense emotional distress, disrupted self-image, relationship challenges, and dissociative symptoms. Unfortunately, this is what transpired in my case. The suicide attempt manifested in my late 60s. Let this serve as a cautionary tale for all practitioners in this medical domain. I was among the fortunate ones. I had endured significant mistreatment from others, and the impact of this doctor's actions had a delayed effect on me. Nevertheless, I was taken aback at the time by Norman's attempt to compromise the fundamental objectivity required for a successful doctor-patient relationship. As a result, the inherent power imbalance in this relationship led to my exploitation, and although I followed him from the doctor's office to a hotel room, I promptly shut him out. Engaging in sexual relations with a patient is considered unethical. For ten-years I placed my trust in him. I reacted aggressively towards my husbands, until in that office from his ambience I learned better self-control. I exited marriages swiftly, unwilling to endure abuse or accept any form of disruption, and I sought his expertise for protection. I was better now? How dare you unravel all that you did for me. A physician should not engage in sexual relations with a patient. If you are a physician, please recognize this: when a patient has already endured the unimaginable, having carried the burden of childhood abuse and survived environments like The Dungeon—where degradation was so profound it claimed the lives of my brothers—then nothing you do can astonish them in the same manner. The shock has already been exhausted. The injury has already been inflicted. This does not

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imply that your transgression is any less grave. It signifies that the patient has been compelled to forge armor from their suffering. Even the most traumatized patient must confront whatever follows without the same sense of shock, for the worst has already been faced. However, that endurance does not equate to consent. It is not resilience that you are permitted to exploit. It is survival, and survival warrants respect. Norman indeed crossed that boundary; the stain does not rest on me, for by the 1990s, I was no longer a victim of anyone—it lies with you, Norman. The day after this doctor compelled me to engage in sexual acts with him at a hotel in Alameda, I relegated the memory to a section of my mind that refused to accept the pain or recall the act. I had two children to nurture. The battles ahead of me were all too consuming. I literally purged a man who was once my favorite doctor, out of my system. Dr. Norman forfeited his medical license. John Winer handled my case in the 1990s. A very skilled attorney, the egregiousness of Norman's actions warranted that Winer settle my case in less than a week. The Bar Association was ingenious in referring me to attorney John D. Winer, a senior partner at Winer, Burritt, Scott & Jacobs, LLP. Known statewide for his record-setting verdicts and settlements, Winer has built his career on representing survivors of sexual harassment, abuse, and catastrophic injury.

"Carol, this person is on the brink of losing his license," he assured me. "What you went through should never happen to anyone," he emphasized. From that point onward, I felt a sense of freedom. I had struggled to shield my mind from what could have

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led to a lasting psychological impact. John's brave advocacy and legal knowledge not only secured justice in my case but also contributed to the establishment of broader protections for victims across California." He lost a patient he regarded as a friend. The Dungeon remains the most traumatic experience of my life. I apologize, Dr. Norman. If your intention was to inflict harm, it is now too late. The Dungeon embodies my total despair and suffering. The repercussions of injustice will tarnish your career, your reputation, and your very being. I express this because I have lived it. I understand what it means to be vulnerable under the care of someone entrusted with authority. And I recognize that while I survived, others may not. For a lesser individual, such betrayal could lead to devastation. Addiction, hopelessness, silence. This is why the responsibility rests with the physician: to uphold the oath, to safeguard, and never to exploit. I endured! "I caution readers: prioritize truth and the genuineness of your cause. Never deceive, never associate with a principle that is not your own. For a decade, Dr. Norman treated me, and I cannot overlook that. However, when he faltered, requesting that I meet him in a hotel room for therapy, his license had to be revoked. He was an elderly man who could not control himself, and in his own wisdom, he would have concurred with the revocation of his medical license. Like Samson and Delilah, certain weaknesses can lead to a man's downfall. Yet, truth must always prevail."



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

FIRST NO HARM

Dr. Norman inflicted additional harm on an individual who had already endured significant challenges! I had two children to care for. It was time to rise from the depths of despair once more and find ways to communicate more effectively enough to have confidence in my speech and future demands. I'd need to inform and protect the Black Community, as well as me. I required a voice. The voice that evolved from my stint at Soul Beat would demand accountability: "You Have One more Day!" These demands would be predicated on truth and balance. They'd hold businesses and establishments accountable to the public. Soul Beat Television was the very first music video network in the country, and broke all the major Oakland artists. Access to mental health resources in the Bay Area. It was crucial for African Americans to heal from the traumas of the tumultuous 1960s, including the Watts Riots of 1965 and the Rodney King incident, among others. Soul Beat gave Oakland, California a voice! Soul Beat shaped me into the advocate that I am today! From the moment I met Chuck, he

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insisted that I face news matter directly, honestly, and look into the camera with an unambiguous face.

Allow me to recount a brief story about a man who was profoundly dedicated to promoting prosperity within the Black community. His brand encountered various challenges. The hosts sometimes instigated disorder. “And Up to The Minute, that’s all the news,” I stated one day. “Carol!” Chuck exclaimed on the red phone. “You are not George Putnam. Discover your own voice, your own news. You are addressing the Black community!” he shouted. I was taken aback. It was my inaugural day as a news reporter. I had never been a news reporter prior to this. There were no lights, the camera was unstable, and I retrieved my news from the trash that morning. The newspaper was soaked; I was glaring through it. The only individual I knew how to imitate was from the time I spent in Watts and Compton. Jerry Dunphy, Walter Cronkite, and my favorite, George Putnam. I was terrified that Chuck would dismiss me on my first day. He slammed the phone down in my ear and the volunteer stage director began laughing at me.

“I told you if you kept pumping your chest out and sounding crazy like that, he was gone call,” Andrea laughed. Moments later, after his call, Chuck Johnson entered the makeshift studio: “Carol Denise. You are a writer. You are beautiful and articulate. You do not need to pretend to be someone else. Grasp that microphone and inform these individuals about healthcare, housing, food resources, and education. That is all you need to do. Be yourself. Always remain

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true to yourself,” Chuck advised. The advice was quick, the scolding was informative and I knew instantly that shit would never happen again. It was the best counsel I ever received. The short man with sweet potato pie-colored skin and thick dark eyebrows imparted numerous lessons on that first day of my career as a news reporter. I vowed never to disappoint him again after that day. There was no dedicated production team, and we frequently organized marathon fundraisers to sustain our small yet determined channel 37 operation. I became so proficient at delivering the news for Chuck Johnson, for 3-years he never said another word to me about the news! Working for Soul Beat meant connecting with the community with valuable resources, ranging from quality medical care to affordable used cars, to getting fairness on the job. When Chuck acquired a building on East 14th Street near the Eastmont Mall, we proudly wore our black Soul Beat T-shirts with bright yellow lettering and painted the interior of that building together as a family. His station transcended mere entertainment; it served as a grassroots archive of Oakland’s Black urban culture, operating until 2003. During this time, my husband and I promoted What Happened to Suzy on Soul Beat. What Chuck was pursuing—despite its gravity—was entertaining, and anyone who hurried through our studios aspired to be part of Soul Beat. The low-quality TV commercials, the unprofessional staff, the faulty cameras... all managed by a brilliant mind with *genuinely good intentions! It was precisely what I required at that stage of my life.* The station went on to become one of the first Black-owned cable TV networks in the U.S.,

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reaching up to 80,000 homes at its peak. Channel 37 ran from 1978 to 2003, broadcasting from Oakland's Eastmont Mall. My shows were always high in the ratings and were recorded at the Soul Beat East 14th Street venue during the bustling noon hour, a time when senior citizens particularly enjoyed the news broadcast.

From 1968 to 2007, Dr. Yusef Bey's bakery stood as a beacon of black entrepreneurship and empowerment, and I believe he endeavored to exemplify positive values within the community, as I personally experienced his goodness, his style and his grace. When I dated Bey during the periods of my time at Soul Beat, he always treated my children and I with the utmost respect. I loved being around his familial environment where women were treated fairly and wanted for nothing. We were all in this to advocate for jobs, healthy food and better housing for the Black community. Ultimately, Yusuf Bey should not be held accountable for the actions of his descendants, as his primary objectives reflected a commendable image. Bey spoke of hope and positive outcomes for the poor like the rest of us did. Local representatives like Barbara Lee and Miley, and Ronald Dellums utilized him as a means to connect with the community and mitigate crime within the black community, which was commendable. On a personal note, Bey referred to me as a warrior. 'You are a warrior for the people. Your smile is contagious, and your narratives of human justice must stem from that remarkable biography you authored or from another source,' he remarked. When the limousines, wealth, and fame arrived following the success of my book **What Happened to Suzy**, I

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recognized that Yusef Bey was sincere as he desired more for my children and me. Shuun, DJ and I were invited to the forefront of Your Black Muslim Bakery, during times when Bey's great generosity to my family was highly commendable in all ways. His belief in my voice served as a reminder that *Suzy* was not just a book—it symbolized a movement. Even years later, his son would be connected to the tragic passing of my colleague Chauncey Bailey. This served as a reminder that Soul Beat's influence encompassed both brilliance and controversy. But that was something I never experienced at Soul Beat or Your Black Muslim Bakery.

I transformed into a catalyst for empowerment for the community. I navigated the difficult terrain of news reporting and the pursuit of justice for the underprivileged Bay Area community, until I gained recognition in the Bay Area as an emerging influencer. In July 2004, Chuck Johnson, the pioneering African American broadcaster who founded Oakland's Soul Beat Television, lost his battle with cancer. Chuck passed away at Alta Bates Summit Medical Center in Oakland at the age of 66. A somber mood enveloped the great city of Oakland, California, following the loss of this highly respected individual who changed lives and assisted many of us in achieving goals that would have been unattainable without him. Chuck Johnson 1939-July 23, 2004 died July 27 at Alta Bates Summit Medical Center in Oakland, California. May he rest in peace forever. Chuck's death was profoundly mourned by his loyal viewers and supporters, who often identified themselves as the 'Soul Beat family.' Chuck imparted a crucial, singular lesson to all who knew him: to

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seize the opportunity and take action, and that is exactly what we all did for Chuck. This book, 'The Advocate' would not be complete without his incredible influence on who I became prior to, and after his death! We raced toward recognition and liberation from a training ground that was truly unmatched. From Soul Beat, my perspectives broadened immensely. As an experienced writer and news broadcaster, I sought to change lives and advocate for myself in the same manner that Chuck had done for me and the entire Bay Area Community.

Memories of Soul Beat

"I experienced a loss in my family, and Luenell Crazy Ass revived my spirit. Her late-night shows were exceptional... Back Door Action, Gail Gipson.

"Many individuals commented on the production and other aspects. However, we had our own station, the community's station. I wish it were still operational." – Ricka White

"Sultanah Muhammad, it was impossible to feel down while watching Soul Beat. It was filled with delightful surprises from our community." – Miranda Wilson.

Soul Beat Fun Facts

First Black-owned TV Network Soul Beat was California's first African American-owned TV station, a pioneer in local Black Media.

Live and Unfiltered: VJs broadcast live without delays, leading to spontaneous moments like prank calls and local teenagers harassing on air.

Local Flavor: Featured unpolished ads for mom-and-pop shops and quirky local personalities, contrasting sharply with national networks.

Launchpad for: Luenell, Carol Denise Mitchell, Chauncey Bailey, \$hort, MC Hammer, and En Vogue to a wider audience.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

REPORTER

Chuck and the great Dr. Yusef Bey had faith in my abilities as a writer and Bay Area News Reporter. With my newly acquired skills as a reporter, I discovered my voice. Education in employment was key. Through Chuck's platform, I championed fairness and freedom of expression in ways I had never imagined possible. At Soul Beat, I uncovered stories within struggling communities that were in dire need of answers. What better method to empower individuals than by creating a resource guide they could consult at any time? Prior to solidifying self-publishing as my domain, I was offered a traditional publishing contract in New York. The firm, known as DIY Publishing, accepted my manuscript titled *Your Rights: What Employers Do Not Want You to Know. * They even asked if I was a lawyer, as the book was written with such authoritative knowledge. Having faced the harsh realities of suffering and marginalization, I felt a profound calling rooted in my insights into the American workplace. The average worker required a voice—one that they could conveniently

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carry in their pockets. It was essential that every action they took regarding their daily employment was grounded in hard work, honesty, and integrity, and they needed to be prepared to fight fiercely for their six statutory rights. They required a means to comprehend their paystubs, to file a workers' compensation claim, and to access detailed information about the locations of the Department of Labor, the EEOC, and the DEFH offices. They needed a practical tool that would serve the best interests of the everyday employee. I immersed myself in employment law, dedicating my time and energy to it. I filed numerous cases against various entities—and I triumphed in each one. The cornerstone of my success was a singular weapon: truth. There was an overwhelming amount of discrimination in the workplace, and I refused to accept it as a norm. Each case I pursued was not solely about my own experience—it was about demonstrating that dignity could not be overlooked. In the workplace, it seemed that anyone could prevail in a financial dispute if they simply documented the occurrences. I aimed to teach workers how to achieve victory—not just legally, but also ethically and strategically. I have always maintained that to seek justice from an employer, one must first commit fully to their job. Arrive early. Never be tardy. Be well-prepared. Give 100 percent in appreciation for the opportunity. Because if an issue arises, you will possess the evidence that the fault did not lie with you.

Shortly after the Millennial, thirteen years after my mother passed away, I was still attempting to emulate her speech, gait, and

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mannerisms. Like many children, I had a long list of grievances against my mother, yet she was undeniably the most intelligent woman I had ever encountered. Shaping my identity in her likeness felt like the most appropriate path for me. She had triumphed in courtroom disputes due to her unwavering integrity as a nurse. “Your honor, I deserve every penny I earn. I have labored diligently throughout my life and raised sixteen children!” she would exclaim. “You win. Court is adjourned,” I remember my sister informing me. My mother was committed to presenting herself at work as if she were the new Miss America. Although her wardrobe was limited, her attire was always clean, her white shoes impeccably polished, and her nurse's cap rested like a crown atop her beautiful dark hair. I thought of her with every page I crafted for my book on Employment Law. I published 'Your Rights: What Employers Do Not Want You to Know.' It was more than just a book—it served as my armor. It was the book that Ron Coulter referred to as 'The Gift to the American Worker.'

A few months after the book's production, I received a phone call from Victoria in Sacramento. The Advocate had advocated for a woman who was illiterate and could not read. “Carol, my mother Rita was having trouble on her job. She is illiterate and she can't read or write. I scanned your book. I found one of your sample letters. Rita copied it word for word and got her job back. Carol, thank you,” said Victoria.

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There is no better feeling in the world than knowing that your creative efforts saved someone's job. It was a moment I will never forget—like the time a woman read my Library of Congress–archived book *What Happened to Suzy*. “Carol, can we meet?” she asked. “Sure,” I replied. “I read *What Happened to Suzy* and realized I was not abused. I am meeting my parents tonight after ten years away. You taught me how much my parents loved me through your own trauma!” she said. I autographed the book for her. No legal force or scared employer could ever intimidate me: Pacific Bell told me directly: do not give this book to any of their employees. No employer wanted even one worker to hold *Your Rights*. That was how dangerous knowledge could be. But I refused to comply. I walked out of that courtroom and placed the book directly into the hands of a Pacific Bell employee. In that moment, the truth was no longer mine alone — it belonged to the worker, where it was always meant to be.

Moments like these let me know I was on the right track—out of *The Dungeon* and into my destiny as the Advocate.

One attorney called *Writing Your Rights* “a gift to the American worker.” Unions embraced it. And though the book never received widespread reviews, the one rating it did earn said it all:

“This book was great, especially working in California. I would highly suggest ANYBODY working in California get this book — 10 stars for it.” — Karen Dawson, July 25, 2013, Amazon.com

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That single review, like the book itself, was mighty. It proved that truth, when written plainly for workers, could change lives. And it was this book — placed on the seats of dignitaries — that became the lever for my next battle: Bridgeway Capital Advisors.

Your Rights became my essential instrument of advocacy—the shield that safeguarded me from erasure and the sword that empowered me to seek justice. From Cypress to Oakland, from The Dungeon to Soul Beat, each lesson imparted that rights are not bestowed; they are asserted. Once asserted, they must be upheld—not only for our own benefit but for the generations to come. My journey in social justice commenced with a singular, straightforward act of defiance. One day, I traversed the Bay Bridge into San Francisco, parked in a garage, and proceeded directly to the EEOC, the DEFH, and the Labor Board. I collected every pamphlet and document available regarding employee rights, resolute in my quest to comprehend the principles of employment law. Later, back in Oakland, I dedicated time to the law library, carefully examining the Civil Rights Act of 1964 along with its amendments, with the goal of converting its content into language that any worker could easily comprehend. Why on earth did I need to be a lawyer to write Your Rights? Absolutely not. A law degree was unnecessary—that is when the fighter in me, emerged. I was just like the wonderful man who inspired the advocate - I was not here to follow the rules. I was here to break them and refine them for quicker and better use. I possessed lived experience and had faced the hardships and the

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nonsense inflicted by others. I understood firsthand what workers forfeited by failing to ask straightforward questions. The term "law" itself can be daunting for many, but my book aimed to dismantle that misconception. It would eliminate the fear and reveal the reality: the route to equitable treatment is not intricate. Workers simply require the reasons and the knowledge to advocate for themselves. I had the honor of collaborating with Chuck Johnson, Chauncey Bailey, and Dr. Yusef Bey, who refined my presentation skills long before I ever tested them in a corporate setting. I had authored books previously, but this one was distinct. This one was pressing. I was championing the cause of the ordinary employee. I gathered all the resources available to support them: initially, how to thrive as an employee, and subsequently, how to advocate vigorously if challenges emerged. By the time I began writing *Your Rights: What Employers Do Not Want You to Know*, I was exhausted—but I remained undeterred in my goal to maintain tunnel vision in preserving all employee's work rights. I composed it prior to the advent of AI, using a Windows 98 computer in Concord, California—driven not by technology, but by personal experience and an unwavering commitment to uphold dignity. Having already endured my mother's household, I recognized the necessity of becoming a leader, someone who would establish the foundation to safeguard others. At *Soul Beat*, I reported on the misfortunes within the workplace and was stunned at how easily an employer would discriminate against an uneducated and uninformed employee. I witnessed the lawsuits. My goal was to ensure that all employees

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could succeed, with ‘Your Rights’ at their side. Workers needed to first understand how to be exemplary employees—and then, they required knowledge of their rights. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII) and its amendments provide employees with six fundamental statutory rights: protection against discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, and disability. Over the years, these rights have been expanded through amendments and related legislation. Six Statutory Rights for Employees: 1. Freedom from discrimination based on race: Employers are prohibited from making decisions regarding hiring, termination, compensation, promotion, or other employment conditions based on race. 2. Freedom from discrimination based on color: Employees are safeguarded against prejudice related to skin tone or complexion, even among individuals of the same racial group. 3. Freedom from discrimination based on religion: Employers are required to offer reasonable accommodations for sincerely held religious beliefs unless doing so would impose an undue hardship. 4. Freedom from discrimination based on sex (including pregnancy and gender identity): Title VII forbids discrimination on the basis of sex. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 clarified that pregnancy, childbirth, and related conditions are encompassed within this protection. Subsequent judicial decisions (such as *Bostock v. Clayton County*, 2020) have broadened these protections to include sexual orientation and gender identity.

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Freedom from discrimination based on national origin. Employees must not be subjected to unfair treatment due to their birthplace, ancestry, culture, or language characteristics. 1. Freedom from discrimination based on age and disability (as amended) o Age: The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (1967) safeguards employees aged 40 and above. o Disability: The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) forbids discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities and mandates reasonable accommodations.

After finishing *Your Rights, What Employers Do Not Want You to Know*, numerous Californians expressed their admiration for the book, and the most enthusiastic feedback I received from this endeavor came from Unions that attended all my book signings to gain insights on how to better support employees. Completing this book and witnessing the positive impact it had on employees stands as one of the proudest achievements of my life. Championing fairness in any context is the most rewarding experience imaginable. This book was the bedrock that taught me to stand up to giants strong enough to impose of them: “You Got One More Day!”



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

JUSTICE

The experience of writing ‘Your Rights’ has imbued me with a confidence comparable to that of a bull. Any employer who disregards employment rights would find no safety in my presence! In addition to creating a roadmap for others in their professional paths, my determination evolved from being fragile to becoming unyielding. I felt equipped to face any challenges that might arise. I was self-assured. I was tenacious. I was committed to becoming the finest employee possible and the staunchest advocate for all my statutory rights. Chuck Johnson taught me how to make the presentation. Yusef Bey insured me that these are my rights. My upbringing gave me resolve. The totality of my previous experiences in life turned me into the perfect voice for human justice. My objective was to safeguard my employment rights while also serving as a voice for the marginalized. This commitment was particularly evident at the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board, where the battle would begin over two derogatory terms: Master and Slave. My tenure in California proved to be a crucial testing ground for my principles. I would like to take a moment to contemplate my

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experiences at The California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board and how my endeavors to eradicate the Master and Slave Machines have influenced my life. Even prior to the Norman incidents or my extensive tenure at Soul Beat, I was acutely aware that California had considerable progress to make in safeguarding workers' rights. It was utterly irrational to have machines labeled as Master and Slave in professional settings. It was already troubling that Black baby boomers had 'Negro' listed on their birth certificates, but really, come on! I have never been the type of individual who could simply sit back and overlook the injustices inflicted upon others without cause. If I noticed something that required change, The Dungeon and the resulting consequences would serve as a reminder to rise up and take action to alter this system or risk becoming part of the problem. In 1992, the terms master and slave—used in the architecture of reproduction systems in working environments pissed me off to be frank, encountering these derogatory labels as a 38-year-old temporary worker was unexpected. My initial reaction upon observing the machines in the CUIAB Copier room was one of confusion: why? How much progress has our nation made since the time of slavery that one could disregard the insensitivity of a reproduction machine labeled Master and Slave, especially to those of African American heritage? I distinctly remember sitting in the lunchroom, consuming a tuna fish sandwich when Lee Volker approached me regarding this issue. "Are you new here?" he inquired cautiously. I was seated alone at a wobbly steel lunch table, on an unstable chair. Lee, who stood at 6'

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5”, was a pale white man with thinning blonde hair. His broad blue eyes suggested he had something important to share. Next, he pulled up a chair and sat right now next to me. Although he was unfamiliar with me, he spent the remainder of my break whispering, discussing how I should observe the Master and Slave machines located in the copier room. At first, I dismissed his comments. I completed my lunch, convinced this was a fabrication. However, I took a moment to return to that area. Upon entering the copier room, I found a machine named Pentagon, positioned on a new pine oak cabinet. The left input component was labeled Master in ornate steel letters, while the output side was marked Slave. A hot rush raced to my head. I got dizzy and had to leave this place at once. I hurried to the restroom and locked myself in the handicap stall, where I wept. In an instant, I was transported back home, in The Dungeon, where various themes were imposed upon me. I tolerated that. I didn’t have to tolerate this. What the CUIAB had assigned to these transcribers was fundamentally wrong.



CHAPTER NINETEEN

Master/Slave

The terms Master and Slave in technology was prevalent in the 1990s across military, computing, and industrial systems, including within the infrastructure of the Pentagon and broader U.S. government operations. The terms described a control hierarchy where one device (the master) governed the functions of another (the slave), and this language permeated everything from database replication to hardware protocols. The origins of these terms can be traced back to engineering and computing as early as the 1920s. The term “master” denoted the device that controlled operations, while “slave” referred to the device that complied, and it was profoundly disheartening to work in an environment that endorsed the use of such machines, especially knowing that African Americans in this country were still awaiting a formal apology for slavery from the leader of the free world. Although it served as a technical shorthand, it bore deeply troubling implications and I walked into that work environment mad as hell. What the fuck was wrong with these people? Who was in charge? Was he/she blind?

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Having those machines in a working environment was wrong.

In 1992, as an advocate, I experienced a profound sense of duty to initiate change. Lee Volker and I became friends. We had serious discussions on how we might be able to get those offensive machines out of the office. I didn't care about what they'd say about me speaking out. If you don't want Carol Denise to speak you must keep shit like this out of my damn face, for real! From the moment I left The Dungeon, my objective had been to fight against injustice. The offensive machinery at the CUIAB Oakland office forced those who were offended into a particular type of cautious collaboration. Widespread adoption: By the 1990s, this terminology the offensive words Master and Slave had become firmly established within military frameworks, industrial equipment, and software protocols. The Pentagon, similar to numerous other organizations, adopted these terms from outdated systems without examining their consequences, as individuals frequently lacked the ability to express their concerns. In 2020, California legislators presented Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 109, which urged all state agencies and private sectors in California to eliminate racially, ethnically, or religiously offensive language from their software technical manuals. The California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board (CUIAB), as a state agency, would likely fall under such directives or be influenced by these initiatives, making the removal of such terminology feasible within its office and systems.

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A friend of mine had been employed at the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board and was not compensated for all of her hours. As a young receptionist at only 38 years old, I did not have many commitments. Nonetheless, I was dedicated to assisting my friends and was recognized for advocating for equitable pay. I was proficient in English and was able to obtain answers for my friend and Lee agreed that if I got to know Dorothy better, she'd tell me more about what the office expected as a whole about those offensive machines. I investigated Dorothy's role at the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board and found that she was being compensated below the standard wages of her colleagues in the office. Lee Volker, who performed the same duties as Dorothy was kind enough to give me his check stubs to weigh against Dorothy's complaint of lesser and lower wages than her male counterpart. When she presented me with a letter from her agency confirming that they had misrepresented her wages, I drafted a requisition for her back pay. After Lee examined those findings and we agreed that Dorothy was due considerable compensation, together Lee and I prepared a letter for her supervisor outlining the facts.

The objective of this requisition submission arises from the fact that you misled me—leading me to believe that you lacked the ability to provide compensation equivalent to that of other employees, such as Lee Volker at the Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board. Instead, you exploited my services—benefiting from two years of unpaid labor while my colleague, Mr. Volker,

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earned \$15.00 per hour for the same work for which I was compensated only \$10.00 per hour. Our responsibilities involve entering data into a prejudicial system. We must insert cassette tapes into the mouth of a Master. Subsequently, we extract the output from the Slave. After assisting Dorothy in her research regarding her Minimum Benefit, I discovered that her agency was compensating her significantly less than her male counterpart, while male employees performing identical tasks received higher pay for the same job. We established this as a professional relationship, which was strictly that, as I diligently worked to secure the wages she rightfully deserved, based solely on the check stubs provided by Dorothy and Lee. Upon completing all necessary work, she expressed her gratitude when her employer issued her a check for \$3,000.00 and a wage comparable to others performing the same duties at the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board who transcribed the same work. A month later, the total amount of payments I assisted Dorothy in recovering reached \$32,960.00. Once it became apparent that I was unafraid to confront employers regarding employment issues, the matter of the Pentagon Master and Slave Machines emerged as my next significant challenge at the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board. I developed a friendship with Lee Volker, who was agreeable to collaborating with me on the issue of recovering Dorothy's rightful wages. Lee frequently extended invitations to both Dorothy and me for lunch or to his residence in Hayward, California, where their frustrations concerning the Master and Slave Machines reached an intolerable

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level. Still, I could not believe that 250 years out of slavery, something like this could even have occurred in an institution like the CUIAB.

"Carol," Dorothy interjected. "You saved me a considerable amount of money with Office Team, and I am confident that you can engage in discussions about those machines with management. Here is Harvey's contact number. He supervises all of us. Although you are a temporary receptionist, the manner in which you managed Office Team concerning those wages was instrumental in helping me retain my home," Dorothy continued. My new friends placed a lot of confidence in my ability to tackle difficult work narratives. I believed in the cause. I believed if we approached this matter professionally, we could achieve the well-deserved fruits of our labor. I was made of the material that could handle these bastards. But I knew I had to have an air-proof approach to get the job done. I lived, ate and drank fairness. I was not going to leave the CUIAB until those Master and Slave machines were taken out of that office. This situation was particularly challenging for me. I was always willing to assist individuals in composing letters or advocating for their interests at work, but dealing with the Pentagon Master and Slave machines compelled me to reach out to my mother, who had only one year left to live, but was still sharp as a tack.

"Mother!" "Well, hello Carol Denise," she responded. "There are machines here labeled Master and Slave. You provided me with invaluable support at UC when I asked you to reach out to

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Beverly McDonald to secure that raise at the Office of the President. The only person I trust to manage this situation is you, Mother. They are depending on me for help. What should I do?" "Well, Carol Denise, consider your past. Slavery was never meant to end; I have no regard for what white individuals claim. I told you when you were 16 that white people do not care about Black individuals. They do not see anything wrong with diminishing your feelings, causing you distress, or compelling you to work in settings that remind you of your inferior status. That is why I have always advised you to follow the golden rule of hard work: arrive early and stay late, because regardless of your efforts, Suzy," she said, using my nickname, "these white individuals will never view you as their equal," Mother asserted. "Lee is white, Mother. He works there too. Not all white individuals can be that awful," I countered. "Suzy, you can believe that shit if you want to! Don't call me unless you want the truth. I am not about to sugar coat shit!" Mother screamed. My mother was not playing with me over these Master and Slave machines. When she started cussing this way, I knew to keep my damn mouth closed and listen. She continued. "You can go and appease these white individuals all day long and they will never change. They will never see you as their equal. I suggest you write a letter to this Harvey mutha-fucka and give him a deadline to remove those machines from that office, or you can sue for the maximum they settle for out of court, Suzy. They all have limits. They all have a price. Return to those unfortunate workers and do what you always do. You called yourself leaving Cypress to get away from me and don't think I know

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you was seeing that man in Los Angeles. Your ass could drive all the way to Pacoima but your ass couldn't go 50 miles to see your own mother. Those aside, you fought for that job at UC and secured it; do the same damn thing for these individuals who may be too frightened to stand up for themselves. I raised your ass to deal with pain. You left home built to fight, Suzy. You have always been a good and honest person, Suzy, who fears nothing, and in this life, you must be that way and remain that way all the damn time to survive. Racism still exists in America. Understand this and try to cope with it. You go and fight like hell to remove that shit out of those offices. I raised sixteen damn kids and had to push a lot of shit out my way to do it," Mother declared. Mother was being herself. This was a courageous woman who was spending her last year pouring knowledge into my head that I knew was real. Mother knew I was the honor roll student. I was Miss Congeniality. I knew how to take on a cause and see it through. I knew how to walk to the front in the middle of the bull shit and take whatever they had to throw at me so long as I believed in the cause. It all started at home in The Dungeon where survival meant building up a brand of tolerance that superseded the status quo. She poured more venom into my blood and I knew at that moment I had to get the job done. I was going to get those Master and Slave machines removed from the CUIAB. It wasn't if now it was when. By the early 90s, activists, engineers, and civil rights advocates began to challenge the terminology, Master and Slave, but my time was now. It was clear this matter had to be handled on a one-on-one basis, so why not me.

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Dear Mr. Harvey:

I trust this letter finds you in good health. I have been employed in the front office of the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board by Office Team for the past six months. It has come to my attention that, as the office manager, I must once again inquire about the reproduction machines located in the east copier room, as you and your upper management team have not responded to my previous two letters. Several unemployment insurance decision writers have expressed that the terms Master and Slave are triggering them due to the historical context of slavery in this country. Since the beginning of this case, I have requested both your and Mary's direct contact information for legal purposes in an effort to resolve this matter, remediate the situation, and achieve a settlement of all claims, as I was initially advised by the Federal agencies before filing any charges. Currently, I have 12 individuals from CUIAB on a petition demanding the removal of these machines from this office and all other offices that bear these offensive names. Unfortunately, this opportunity has consistently been denied by your offices, primarily through silence. You did inform me that you personally conducted an internal investigation and found no complaints regarding the Master and Slave machines. Regrettably, your findings did not restore my dignity, nor that of the others who are affected daily by the use of these machines. I am confident that we can arrive at an amicable resolution by adhering to California discrimination laws. I request a response from you and your legal team within five days of receiving this letter; otherwise, I

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will seek legal representation to remove these machines from all offices and obtain compensation for our distress.

This letter is written solely for the purpose of initiating and or furthering settlement discussions. Therefore, neither this letter nor any of the information contained in it may be used for any purpose in any subsequent litigation. This request is based on facts relevant to California Law and Federal provisions as it pertains to this matter.

Your immediate review of this matter is requested. I look forward to your reply.

Very truly yours,

Carol Denise Simms

The California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board should have recognized that it is unsurprising for Black Americans to have an issue with the terms Master and Slave. These terms evoke a reflexive reminder of the transatlantic slave trade, and it is evident beyond any doubt that they carry a negative connotation for everyone, particularly in the context of using such phrases in everyday work environments. According to "All About Circuits," the terms Master and Slave have been utilized for decades in engineering language, and only since 2020 have technology companies begun to seek more neutral alternatives. It is shocking that the underrepresentation of Black individuals in the high-tech field has contributed to the prolonged use of these derogatory terms.

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In 2017, only 3.53% of electrical engineering degrees were awarded to Black students. In the context of the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board, within the hardware ecosystem, a "master" device functioned as the central hub, while the "slave" acted as the output, responding to the master's commands. In other words, office transcribers would insert VHS tapes into the Master, which would then eject via the Slave component. As early as 2003, Los Angeles officials recommended that manufacturers, suppliers, and contractors consider alternatives to the terms master and slave. Recently, EE Times contributor Sawyer Ellis urged the IEEE to abandon the terms "Master" and "Slave," suggesting "Controller" and "Responder" as alternatives. It was believed that slavery represented a profound moral injustice; he characterized it as dehumanizing and argued that it laid the foundation for American capitalism. He maintained that the legacy of slavery endured long after its abolition, creating a system of economic and racial oppression that denied Black Americans full citizenship and perpetuated inequality, as he elaborated in his book, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade*, along with subsequent works such as *Black Reconstruction in America*. Civil Rights leader and co-founder of the Black Panther Party (BPP), David Hilliard, regarded the institution of slavery as a fundamental historical injustice that continued to foster systemic racism and economic exploitation in contemporary America. Hilliard's viewpoint was not limited to the historical practice in isolation, but rather focused on its enduring impact on modern society and the ongoing fight for

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Black liberation. He argued that although forced labor was officially abolished following the Civil War, the 'peculiar mindset' and the 'racist ideology and propaganda' that legitimized it did not vanish. He stated that this mindset, rooted in an 'invented moral authority' and white supremacy, continued to permeate American culture and institutions.

This matter was especially troubling and important to me because CUIAB is an institution, and the Master and Slave machine served as propaganda to remind Black individuals of their identity and the reasons for remaining in their designated roles. While the machine's application in the engineering sector can be somewhat comprehended, given the low representation of Black individuals in those workforces, it is, quite frankly, difficult to grasp why anyone aware of the history of slavery in the United States would accept working in such environments. What better way to say this than to force employees to use propaganda-like machines to produce work for the agency. Staring in the face of the slave master that's in charge of producing the work while the slave spits it out. Black individuals depend on unemployment insurance foundations to provide equitable treatment for all, both in and out of the workplace. No matter what is said about the production of machines that highlighted the words Master and Slave, in no way was this ever ethical, thoughtful or simply done by innocent mistakes. Hilliard's insights were particularly relevant regarding institutions that evidently disregarded the feelings of Black individuals.

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Following my meeting with the transcribers at the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board regarding the Master and Slave machines, it became clear to me, after my termination from CUIAB, that I had to advocate for change. This was not for financial benefit, but rather for liberation and the right to work in an environment devoid of racism. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is the key federal law that forbids employers from discriminating based on race, color, religion, national origin, or sex. This legislation is enforced by the DEFH and the EEOC. Experiencing wrongful termination was not my primary concern following my dismissal from CUIAB. My main focus was to protect the workers and articulate their grievances in a manner that was non-discriminatory and equitable. Lee Volker, Dorothy, and I formulated a strategy. I consulted a civil rights attorney located in Hayward, California. In terms of employment issues, we sought to resolve the matter outside of court, aiming for a monetary settlement from CUIAB; however, we declined the settlement on three occasions unless it included the elimination of the objectionable master and slave machines from the CUIAB offices.

I reviewed the settlement agreement, hoping the judge would not dismiss my case. One night at 11:00 PM, Harvey called me, requesting that I remove his name from the legal documents. As head of the department, he suggested that I reissue my complaint without his name, and he would agree to settle for the maximum amount allowed prior to litigation. "Does this mean the machines will be removed from the office?" I inquired. "Yes. I must go now,"

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he replied. I then called my mother. "He wants me to remove his name from the paperwork, Mother. What should I do?" "Remove his name from the paperwork, Suzy," she advised. I called and provided my attorney with the necessary instructions. In the end, I obtained \$35,000 and ensured the removal of the problematic Master and Slave machines from the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board offices. Although the issue was resolved outside of court, I did not receive public acknowledgment for the removal of those machines, but that was not my primary concern. Following the settlement, those machines would be eliminated, allowing workers to operate freely in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its amendments. Subsequently, Lee Volker contacted me with both encouraging and discouraging news. "Dorothy has resigned and returned to Atlanta. After you assisted her with overtime, she expressed her intention to use the funds to go back home. She was present last week when those machines were taken out of the office, Carol. I am thankful for your assistance; it was crucial. Now, transcribing and printing those cases has become significantly easier without those outdated machines," Lee stated. Although Lee was a white man, he was a kind-hearted person who wished to work in a setting devoid of discrimination.

Summary

I authored this book under the impression that I had not achieved the purpose God assigned to me in this life, until I remembered the earlier voices that inspired me to become the

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fighter I am today. There was an aspect of my character that was unafraid when it came to standing up for the underdog. I am not wealthy. I do not accept money from others. I value fairness and the joy on a person's face when we resolve these issues. I will always cherish the smile on Lee Volker's face when he informed me that those machines were no longer in use. "Thank you, Carol Denise. We could not have accomplished this without you. You were a temporary worker. Our positions are permanent. This sometimes leaves no space for honesty. God placed you here to advocate for the voiceless," he remarked. Lee and I were in a relationship for a brief period and have remained lifelong friends. I am always eager to assist wherever I am required.

Final Thoughts It took me some time to understand that I had a purpose in this singular life we lead. It became evident after departing from Fowler Avenue and The Dungeon that I needed to safeguard each butterfly that had lost a wing and to console every mother who had been unjustly denied benefits. I recall how I loved when others called me Carol Denise. I was always transported back into my grandmother's living room where she reminded me my name is not Suzy. I recall being 16 and mother stopped me in the hallway of our home on Fowler Avenue to remind me that racism would never allow me to forget that I am Black. I witnessed injustices and responded instinctively based on my own life experiences. It was never about me, but rather about what I could do to assist or rectify situations for others. In 1992, I was still a young mother of two with a promising future ahead and battles that

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were more tedious than this one. During my tenure at the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board, I felt the most pride in my advocacy. I was not fully aware of the true significance of my actions when I fervently advocated for my rights or those of others. My sole intention was to alleviate losses for anyone I encountered who needed my help and make sure all workers were treated fairly under the law. I sought nothing in return but a smile. Unexpectedly, a year after the CUIAB case concluded, I received a call from Dorothy expressing her gratitude for my being the one to have those machines removed from the Oakland, California offices. Although there are no records to substantiate this significant moment, I am pleased that an American worker, regardless of race, can enter the workplace and receive the fairness they rightfully deserve.

The Ripple Effect

Years later, Lee Volker — one of the main transcribers at the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board, and someone I dated afterwards — told me how much better work became after the “Master/Slave” machines were removed. He explained that once the Pentagon ordered them gone, the CUIAB followed suit, taking them out of all California offices.

There were witnesses to this event, and their memories confirm what I already knew: this was not a small win. It was a victory that rippled outward, changing workplaces across the state. Though I never received public credit, and though Harvey insisted

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I drop his name from the case before settling, I remain proud. Proud that persistence and truth carried the day. Proud that my mother lived to see the win in her final year of life. Proud that advocacy, even without headlines, can dismantle injustice.

The removal of the “Master/Slave” machines was more than a victory over offensive language — it was proof that persistence and truth could dismantle injustice even without headlines or trials. That win carried me forward with renewed conviction. If words on a machine could shape the way people worked, then words in a book could shape the way workers lived. Out of that realization came my next battle: to put truth into print, to expose what employers did not want their workers to know, and to give the American worker a gift that could not be ignored.

“Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will” -Frederick Douglass



CHAPTER TWENTY

Discrimination 101

Eleven years after my mother's death, I still find myself admiring her presence and the way she would light up a room, overcoming any barriers that might have impeded her. She never shied away from facing challenges in her quest for justice, and I can still recall Chuck Johnson's words urging me to be true to myself. In times of great difficulty throughout my life, I drew strength from the traits and spirit of my mother, which helped me navigate this challenging journey, as well as from the man who inspired my authentic self. By the time I reached 51, I had written two influential books that changed my life and bolstered my confidence. I was the person who navigated through career centers to assist others in setting up email accounts and applying for jobs. Onward we go, ready, set, and let's begin! I was no longer confined to greeting visitors at the entrance as a security guard. By engaging in news reporting for the public and crafting my own scripts on a daily basis, I transformed myself into the professional front office

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manager I had always aspired to be. Honestly, I might have pursued a career as a nurse like my mother, but drawing blood was not something I enjoyed. I appreciated the clothing, the hairstyles, the shoes, and any opportunity to present myself with the authority I admired when my mother wore that white uniform to her job; or, when I entered the set at Soul Beat to deliver the noon news. Remarkably, I managed to cope with the repercussions of my early childhood traumas by acknowledging how they affected my employment opportunities and stability in my marriage. Upon reviewing the leaflet for the Office Manager role at Bridgeway Capital Advisors, I felt a surge of enthusiasm to pursue this opportunity. The presence of high-quality metals, the bright fluorescent lighting cascading from lofty ceilings, the robust and practical craftsmanship, along with the designer aesthetics and natural illumination, complemented by the refreshing scent of the Bay's clean breeze, convinced me that this position was ideal for me. Situated in the core of the financial district, I excelled in overseeing operations and making strategic decisions aimed at enhancing growth within the financial sector. My journey of self-monitoring and personal development, coupled with a belief system that embraced my positive path to success, has significantly contributed to my emotional stability after four years of service in the Office of the President at the University of California, Berkeley.

Raising two children left no room to languish in the past; material growth was necessary, and resilience became my daily practice. I believed in myself and all those who opened my books

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and found answers to every day challenges... I never drank, smoked, or used drugs. I knew I had to remain strong and in control if I was ever to move beyond the horrendous abuses of my past. I'll tell you one thing I knew about me at this time. Nobody was ever going to trample over me or my rights. I knew how to fight for the employer. But you damn well better know, I was also going to fight for me. Growing up Black in the United States of America warranted my mother to stop me dead in my tracks one day. I was only 16.

"Suzy, white people might pretend to show affection towards you, yet they do not truly care," my mother remarked. "What on earth!" I stared at her in disbelief. The importance of her dark skin and deeply set black eyes was clear. In an instant, that image of my mother on my grandmother's television overwhelmed my thoughts! My enraged mother delivered her message with such fervor and conviction that I had no choice but to regard her words as fact! I stood motionless before her. She moved in closer.

"Girl, you better not ever assume that a white person truly likes you. You must enter their professional environments fully knowledgeable about the job. You are required to exert twice the effort to establish your worth, and throughout this process, they will merely tolerate your presence," my mother advised. I found myself standing in the corridor of our residence on Fowler Street, bewildered by the origin of this conversation. My mother had been engaged in struggles throughout her life. For her to take this moment to impart such a profound warning to me had to signify

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something important. “Don’t ever forget how some white people work!” she ended. She wrote my future. “You Got One more Day!” words that bit hard in my 70’s. Bitterness. The road from Slavery to Freedom had been laced with unfairness. Our expulsion from Watts after the riots left a wound on my mother’s heart! She placed fearlessness into my DNA. Mother wanted to make sure that I knew not to trust a people that enslaved us and brought us here on slave ships. Tolerate them! But don’t ever trust one damn word they say! Even after the Emancipation Proclamation, “All persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.” Were we free? Or, was this shit still going on, post January 1, 1863? I recall that day. Mother, dressed in full all-white nursing gear, white stockings, including her white hat with the two black piped stripes, turned on her heels to leave me with this stark reality, *“White people. They would never like me!”* I never forgot that conversation. Lessons learned. Working for Bridgeway Capital Advisors drove this message straight home. I was Black. I still was not free. But I was prepared to wage a war!

“There is in this world no such force as the force of a man determined to rise. The human soul cannot be permanently chained.” -W.E.B. DU Bois

In the fifth decade of my life, I had become adept at discerning insincerity. I was poised to be the ideal employee that anyone could envision; or the formidable force that could dismantle you. As an employee, it is your prerogative to decide how you wish

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to interact with others in the workplace. Bridgeway was an emerging firm that managed client assets, with aspirations to double their client base within a year. From their new location in the heart of the San Francisco financial district, they crafted investment strategies for both foreign and domestic clients in Sausalito and throughout the Bay Area. They had already formulated plans to establish a new office in Atlanta, Detroit and Miami. As a pivotal figure in the role of front office manager, I recognized the necessity of being sharp.

That night before the interview, I dug into my savings and spent a whopping 800 dollars at Neiman Marcus in San Francisco. I had to look the part for this job. Should I persevere and get this job I'd have direct first-person contact with some of the top individuals in Bay Area finance. I was to arrange meetings, keep the professional staff's priorities seamless make copies and make travel arrangements for the corporate staff. At this time during the 1990s and early 2000s, new technology was booming! Executives used BlackBerry devices that were first called "Blueberries" Motion (RIM) pagers and email devices. Bridgeway used the handheld BlackBerry 5810 that were early smartphones with email, web browsing and mobile devices. The job announcement made it clear that understanding and knowing the functionalities of the "berries" was essential to getting this high-end top level office management position.

As I spent the entire night studying and researching a particular job announcement for my interview, I was unaware that these racist individuals would soon make it evident that a key feature

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of the Blackberry, the "Push email" service, which automatically delivered new emails to devices in real time without requiring users to manually check for them, would become my favorite aspect of this old device. Just imagine being able to send an urgent message with a single push of a button to all of these racist individuals, these privileged white men who didn't give two-shits about a Black person. Furthermore, while the push email was favored by busy professionals, the spontaneity of my usage of this device enabled me to communicate more swiftly than even the latest cell phone devices. The night prior to the interview, I diligently studied everything I could about the small investment boutique, recalling my mother's advice about the importance of preparation and the necessity of outperforming my white peers. With great diligence, I analyzed the markets and potential investments, learning how to manage a diverse array of assets such as stocks and bonds. I familiarized myself with my role and the roles of others within the firm, studying the principles of overseeing a portfolio of investments in relation to the clients' objectives and risk profiles. I anticipated who the primary competitors would be in acquiring and servicing such clients. Indeed, I was ready to oversee Bridgeway and three other companies of a similar kind. Indeed, with my education at Soul Beat and professional results at the CUIAB, I felt more assured than I had ever been in the corporate landscape of America! Having already written one celebrated novel along with another centered-on employment law, I was on a clear trajectory toward professional achievement in the financial district of San Francisco. I understood

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that if I continued to strive, my potential new employers would take great pride in my work. Had African Americans been free from slavery long enough to be valued based on their character? Stay tuned.

"Success is not final; failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts." – Winston Churchill

San Francisco is a vibrant blend of history, tourism, and outdoor activities, featuring breathtaking bay views and convenient access to iconic landmarks, all set against the backdrop of an active maritime port. Short walks to Pier 39 and the sight of the seemingly floating Alcatraz on the Bay made my time working in San Francisco one of the most cherished periods of my life. I felt like my mother during that first moment. Dressed impeccably, with my head held high, the strong San Francisco winds lifted my curls towards the sky. I approached the thick double glass doors, took a deep breath, and entered the lobby. "Where to?" inquired the guard. I felt nervous as I replied, "1 Maritime 246." During my initial interview at Bridgeway, the hiring manager—a fair and kind Caucasian woman—listened intently to my story. The blonde beauty was focused with her gorgeous green eyes and soft appearance. She was touched by *Suzy and Your Rights: What Employers Do Not Want You to Know*. She approved of my advocacy.

"What is the most difficult challenge you have ever encountered in a job?" she inquired while we enjoyed our coffee. "Removing the Master and Slave machines from the copier and

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reproduction room at The California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board. I strive for everyone to share similar work experiences. I have a low tolerance for any form of discrimination," I replied to her beaming expression. I had nothing to hide. Proud of my advocacy for others, fear did not live in me. I was not afraid to say it. She had been a liberal long before the term gained popularity. Her smile was genuine. She absorbed this remarkable interview experience. She viewed me not just as a candidate but as an advocate ready for the role. The interview was engaging, open, and equitable. Dressed impeccably and carrying a burgundy leather briefcase that cost me a significant 250 dollars, I was resolute in my desire to obtain this position and to be the best employee I could be. I fully recognized the dignity of work, and that acknowledgment held immense importance. It was the reason she chose me for the position. I felt the pulse of the city beneath me. I sensed the depth of my experiences and the individual I had evolved into. The glass tower sparkled against the Bay, the perfect setting for work—an office that represented power, precision, and potential. "I belonged here." The marble lobby, the shining elevators, all the aspects that Soul Beat should have symbolized but never did. This was not East 14th Street or Dr. Noman's chat box on Broadway and 14th Avenue. This was not a place that would dare to have machines like Master and Slave. This was the financial district, the major leagues, and for all I had seen, heard, and experienced, I had never been more prepared for a job in my life than I was for this one.

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It was 8:55 on a Monday morning. The interviewer gazed at me from across the polished table and inquired, "I trust you enjoyed the tour of our business. "I absolutely loved it!" I responded with enthusiasm. At that moment, I was not merely responding to a question—I was embodying my mother's legacy of professionalism, self-assurance, and impeccable diction; simultaneously, I was shaping a new version of myself. Her voice resonated within me, and her presence provided the strength and confidence I needed to assert my place in that room.

During the next phase of the interview, the hiring manager informed me that John Rothman and his co-chiefs would not be available to meet with me right away, and there could be other candidates to interview at that time. "If you are selected, they will meet you upon their return from Sausalito," she stated, after providing me with a comprehensive overview of John Rothman and the other leaders of the investment firm's team. "However, you will require their contact information, here is a list of all their BlackBerry devices," she added. Immediately, due to my extensive research, I secured that executive BlackBerry contact list in the front zipper of my brand-new briefcase, because it was clear to me at that moment, I got the job! There was no chance I would misplace those numbers! Her remarks left me feeling uneasy. Racism is a reality, and I recognized that there was a chance those executives might not be willing to accept a Black woman in such a significant front-office role. After providing the host with a copy of one of my news broadcasts from Soul Beat, a copy of 'Your Rights,' and the Library

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of Congress LCCN number for What Happened to Suzy, she responded positively to my skills portfolio. The interviewer appeared to be impressed.

“You’re the 3rd interview. Nobody comes close to the totality of your professional portfolio, Carol,” she beamed. I sucked it all in knowing that I was going to get the job. Other questions followed in a similar fashion. Later, I was given a second tour of the exceptionally luxurious mailroom setting—the conference room featuring a dark walnut-colored long, polished wooden table, the floor-to-ceiling windows offering views of the Bay, and the vibrant corporate activity that underscored Bridgeway's significance, were polished and opulent in all ways.

I worked hard. I came in early and I stayed late. Prepared. I walked into my front desk position with pride, I left knowing that this was a job I could keep forever.

"Carol, your contribution is vital to the success of Bridgeway. You adapted quickly. Your decision-making skills are exceptional. You have made significant progress: I take pride in witnessing your growth!" my supervisor remarked.

Two weeks into my position, there was no indication this job was headed for a collision. My professionalism and approach were vital in ensuring a smoothly operating environment, and I had not faltered. As I had been placed at Bridgeway through a temporary agency, the hiring manager promptly decided to offer me a full

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benefits package in the same way I had earned permanent placement at The University of California Berkeley, a decade ago. I was notified that the senior executives were interested in meeting me. By that point, I had already adapted to the job's pace and received praise for my exceptional performance. I was aware of who John and his partners were, and I was particularly enthusiastic about meeting them, having effectively communicated with all of them via Black Berries. The woman who recruited me—a striking white professional radiating warmth and integrity—was truly remarkable. She demonstrated her confidence in me from the outset. I had memorized the dignitaries' BlackBerry numbers and had already used my new device to send schedules and critical information pertinent to the role. I understood the office's dynamics and felt a sense of pride in my contributions. The workplace was pristine, well-kept, and functioned effortlessly. For a fleeting moment, I pondered whether I truly belonged there. Unlike Soul Beat, this organization had the money for video equipment, proper lighting and professional contacts and skilled electricians. Nevertheless, I maintained my composure—dark-skinned, professional, and ready to assist the owners in growing their business.

The large dogs entered the front office, and my life changed immediately. My mother's caution about the unreliability of white individuals, who would inevitably harbor disdain for my black skin, was on the verge of becoming a reality. Chuck Johnson and Yusef Bey were absent, but their influence guided me. They steadied me in ways I drew on at this moment. These giants of business would have

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had all the right answers. What they lacked in financial resources, they made up for with careful diligence, especially when it came to directly confronting the white man for information. It did not take them long to realize that I was not white. I stood in the lobby of my front office, dressed impeccably. Professional in every aspect, I greeted the owners appropriately and gestured with my left arm towards the conference room. To John Rothman and his contemporary equivalent of the Ku Klux Klan, I was deemed unsuitable for the position. I remember John Rothman entering the conference—he was a tall, attractive, tanned man dressed in a black designer suit, his dark hair perfectly styled, and an expensive scent wafting behind him. With a brisk breeze blowing through the open window, John was the first to speak.

"Who hired you?" he inquired as I stood up to close the window. Clad in a striking dark blue two-piece suit by Susan Winton, paired with a crisp white blouse, I shut the window and settled back into my chair. My hair was arranged in a neat French Roll, reminiscent of Lana Turner. I felt ready for this meeting as I clasped my cold hands on the table. I recall how, despite the chill, sweat began to form under my arms. "I was interviewed and employed by your manager," I responded. I continued, "Within a week of my employment, Bridgeway presented the agency's contract. I am fully committed as your employee," I smiled. One could hear a pin drop as the men stared in disbelief. They were displeased with my statement. "Well, we required someone who is skilled in multiple languages. A significant number of our clients are international," he

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retorted. As my heart began to sink, the discomfort in my stomach did not subside as I did all I could not to cry.

Three additional white men entered the room. I remained resolute. I was self-assured. I was the author of *Your Rights: What Employers Do Not Want You to Know*. I was the woman who confronted the CUIAB, and got Master and Slave machines pulled out of offices throughout California. This was not the welcome I deserved, yet these white individuals did not intimidate me, because my mother warned me that this very day would come. There was nothing these men could say to me to make me cower.

Three days later, the manager who hired me rushed in, clearly taken aback by the meeting I scheduled. "John, what are you saying?" she demanded. I had sent her a message on the Black Berry and Sally immediately rushed to the conference room that early brisk morning in my defense. "I brought Carol Denise in from the agency. She performed exceptionally well in that interview, and no one else could do this job better than her!" the hiring manager declared. Sally's beautiful face was soaked with tears. She was impressed by the totality of my work experiences. These bastards had not taken a minute to get to know me. John turned sharply to face me, scrutinizing me as if I were from the 1600s. In that moment, I recalled those history books detailing the journey from slavery to freedom, and others that chronicled how the biases of slavery would resurface time and again. Here I was in 2006, standing with my

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hands behind my back, feeling as if I were on the chopping block. Then I heard John say,

"Carol. We need someone who speaks multiple languages. Call the agency. Find someone else," he commanded. Because part of my job was to secure new hires, I was instructed by John to recruit a white woman who was proficient in foreign languages to take my place. I understood the implications of that request. I was Black. Not the right color. Not the right fit or age for their desired image, and I was required to uphold professionalism for the rest of the day. They requested—both politely and professionally—that I reach out to the temp agency to arrange for my replacement.

"As you wish," I said back. As we all settled into the next matter on the morning agenda, I had a plan. This was a punch to the gut like none other. However, I had already discerned the underlying framework. I had already detected the recurring motif, as I began taking the minutes for the next menu item. On that day, as I worked, I had already crafted the narrative. The following day, I utilized my Blackberry early to summon the executives to the conference room, where they thought I'd be introducing them to a new temporary hire. I was well prepared to let these bastards have it. It was time to situate myself into the arms of the law.

I employed the pushed button feature on the Blackberry.

"John and all executives of 1 Maritime. There is a meeting in Conference A. Time: 9:00AM. Before entering conference room,

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A I paused at the rich ornate lettering that spelled the company's name. I gazed out towards the San Francisco Bay Bridge feeling bad that Black people still had to fight hard to be accepted into these types of venues. That view was the indication that you had achieved success, but like mother said, there'd be white folks that clearly didn't like you and did not want you in their circles. I had polished that table for an entire two weeks. I had ensured that the appropriate messages were sent to their Blackberries. I had organized their files, updated client lists, corrected phone numbers, set up conference rooms, and prepared spreadsheets. I had completed the tasks. And now I found myself being told to leave—merely due to the color of my skin. I contemplated the history of slavery and the idea that the struggle continues indefinitely. I considered the significance of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its later amendments, recognizing their vital role. In that moment, I understood that I had become the embodiment of everything I had been advocating for—yesterday, today, and in the future. The predominant theme of this day was discrimination. John and his team treated me unjustly due to my race, which is Black, and they fostered a hostile work environment, leading to an unfair termination. This action was in violation of the law. I was ready to initiate claims under federal statutes, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its amendments, particularly because I am over 40 years old. This constituted disparate treatment, as I was deliberately treated differently on account of my race. The law prohibits discrimination in all aspects of employment, encompassing hiring, firing, compensation, job

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assignments, promotions, layoffs, training, fringe benefits, and any other terms or conditions of employment.

My demand. I wanted \$40,000 and one year of Cobra and a positive recommendation letter for future employment. On another brisk and cool day in San Francisco, the conference room was stunning, immaculate, and a new pot of coffee along with condiments and rolls were arranged on the counter, below the ticker tape of breaking news on the Fox News Channel. I placed a written copy of my demand letter on top of a copy of *Your Rights: What Employers Do Not Want You to Know* on each chair.

One week after John Rothman advised me to step down, I understood how to endure blows and deflect the most extreme forms of attack. I was the advocate, and at this moment, I needed to be the most resolute for myself. My anxiety had been so intense that I became ill in the restroom. Nevertheless, I reassured myself: You can achieve this, Carol. Walk with the confidence of your mother. Embrace the moment for the significance it holds as you did when Chuck Johnson told you to be yourself. Do not allow these racists to escape accountability. There is no time for a mediator or intermediary. You must advocate for yourself and for all those who will follow you. These individuals are racist. Call it what it is. Take

John Rothman was the first to read the demand letter. Next, he gazed at me in disbelief. "Carol," he asked, "Is this your demand letter?" I answered yes. "Did you author this book?" "I did," I

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affirmed to this no-good son-of-a-bitch! All the men had read the demand. None were in denial. The room descended into silence. I had to literally stop myself from yelling. Expressions fell. The underlying structure had been unveiled. It took five minutes for John to agree to my settlement terms. When they offered financial compensation, I made it clear that I could not accept it—not at that time due to California's over 40 laws. What fools. I didn't want to work in an environment that didn't want me. My heart was broken. The victory was sweet.

Had I not been ready for this type of rejection and suffering, I would have faltered. I stood firm against being confined in a room without a voice. The broader perspective on discrimination and the impact of mental illness fortified me, as it revealed how even the most esteemed professionals felt entitled to inflict pain upon me in response to their own suffering. This was a victory I would always remember. It symbolized a reckoning. They sought to erase my existence. Instead, I documented their actions and confronted them all through that old BlackBerry from days gone by. My encounter with Bridgeway Capital Advisors held profound significance. Facing four men over a position I rightfully deserved left indelible scars on my heart. However, when one reflects on the larger context, the pain becomes part of a framework established over centuries. Racism is not simply an isolated event—it is the very foundation upon which Black individuals were brought here on ships in the 1600s. It is unrealistic to expect that such a structure could be dismantled, healed, and rectified in merely 250 years.

In Conclusion:

Bridgeway was not merely a financial confrontation; it was evidence that advocacy transcends what even attorneys hesitate to address. One day prior to this significant out-of-court settlement, a lawyer declined five minutes of work, deeming my case impossible. Yet I entered that distressing conference room ready to succeed. My self-advocacy earned me a Letter of Recommendation, and I left with \$40,000 and a year of COBRA — a triumph forged from honesty and perseverance. Upon returning to her office, I carried not only the check but also the truth, and I told her directly: seek a new career. Advocacy is not simple. It brings with it stomachaches, tears, and nights filled with despair. However, the key to winning any case or cause is honesty. Never lie. Never distort the truth. This is the ceremonial law of advocacy — the principle that transforms wounds into victories, and silence into monuments.



CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

My Civil Rights

I am still astonished by the extent to which I was battling both an institution and a business simultaneously, ultimately achieving victory through my decisions to advocate for myself. It is profoundly surprising that a division intended to protect the underprivileged instead provides cover for the powerful. The Civil Rights Department was created to support victims; however, in my situation, it intervened to safeguard, inform, and insulate the opposing party, including the DOJ, the Director, and others in higher positions, (they all ignored me)! Consequently, the Civil Rights Department played a pivotal role in forcing me to abandon both my small claims case and my Civil Rights case. They even defended Coby—the very staff member who harassed me—by referencing his lengthy service at Southgate Bend as if that justified his misconduct. This defense, coupled with Sardenia’s unwavering bias, led me to suspect that the two of them had conspired against me.

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Faced with this betrayal, I made the only smart move available: I withdrew my small claims case and the CRD investigation after learning that CRD was sharing case information with the Defendant and not me. My withdrawal was not surrender—it was protection. It preserved my record, safeguarded my rights, and prevented CRD from marching into the courtroom with more prejudicial information for the opposing side.

Generally, when an individual submits a discrimination complaint, the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (CRD) assesses the details and determines whether to proceed with an investigation. If the case is accepted, CRD conducts an independent inquiry into the facts and legal matters involved. This process includes examining the responses from respondents to the complaints, as well as reviewing other information and evidence provided by both complainants and respondents, among other considerations. CRD strives to resolve disputes in suitable cases and may also opt to initiate legal proceedings. If you suspect that you have experienced discrimination, harassment, or retaliation, CRD might be able to investigate and assist you in addressing your complaint. However, what should you do if the entity discriminating against you is the very establishment you are reporting? What if, due to the California Civil Rights System (CCRS) administered by CRD, you are unable to submit additional information as required because the individual you are reporting is the organization itself? The Civil Rights Department of the State of California informs you that utilizing the CRD investigation process is not mandatory. You have

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the option to file your own lawsuit instead. This is where the CRD investigator mishandled my case. She intervened in the small claims process on behalf of the opposing party, which compelled me to withdraw my small claims and retract my case from the Civil Rights Department. It was the most unjust civil circumstance I have ever encountered in my life. By accepting my case, CRD had initially concluded that the allegations I presented in my filing fell under the jurisdiction of a law that the department enforces. Through their own analyst, CRD let me down. They declined to thoroughly investigate and evaluate the facts and legal issues pertinent to my case. Sardenia refused to consider the evidence from my witnesses and all other sources. She did not even attempt to obtain the medical reports. No conciliation efforts were successful, and she showed no intention of adhering to the facts; the CRD Analyst severely compromised the case, ultimately forcing me to close it.

The Civil Rights Department

If you remember, my narrative commences with a significant betrayal that occurred on September 5, 2025, at 9:00 am. At that time, unbeknownst to me, the Civil Rights Department (CRD) Analyst disclosed the timeline of my case to the defendant, Southgate Bend, while withholding it from me, the complainant. The judge postponed my case from September 5, 2025, to March 27, 2026, based on a closing date that the Vice President of Southgate Bend had—but I was never informed of it. I sat in the courtroom, mentally and physically constrained by the limitations

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imposed upon me, by the Civil Rights Department. How many times has this happened before? I observed in utter dismay as the Vice President rifled through his documents in search of that crucial date that would signify the conclusion of the Civil Rights Department's investigation. The CRD is obligated to inform the complainant of the expected conclusion date. The complainant should not be excluded from that process. I was excluded. It was intentional. This is precisely what their investigator did to me. In the conclusion of a civil rights investigation, the agency determines whether rights were violated and notifies the involved "parties" with a closure letter, should a violation be found. By providing this information solely to the Vice President of South Bend and not to me, I was placed at a distinct, severe disadvantage against the defendant, for I could not contest that of which I did not know. I was compelled to enter that courtroom feeling undermined by the Civil Rights Department in Sacramento, CA, which left the impression that they did not need to undertake corrective measures, such as altering policies or offering remedies; CRD informed them that there would be no enforcement actions against them, such as the loss of federal funds, and that no violations would be held against them. I was not going to receive a notice that would potentially allow me to pursue a lawsuit in federal court because CRD had granted the opponent a benefit that was not extended to me. Consequently, the opponent would not be required to take corrective actions, provide remedies for their actions, or offer relief to the complainant. CRD had no intention of endorsing any

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proceedings or even terminating federal funding, as outlined on HHS.Gov's page regarding how the OCR investigates complaints. Before I would permit this agency to issue me a dismissal and a Notice of Rights to sue, I needed to inform them that they were indeed discriminating against me. To avoid another preliminary setup, I would not pursue a hearing with an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) or take my case to federal court; instead, I would have to redirect my focus away from the defendant and direct my efforts toward the Civil Rights Department. How could the Civil Rights Department, which was meant to represent my Sexual Harassment Case, turn so viciously on me? How could they treat me in this manner? Perhaps they assumed that since I am 70-years-old I could not fight. I had been known for years to advocate for my rights. It was evident here they didn't know who the hell they were dealing with. My next move shut the door on CRD and South Bend Senior Homes. This silence was not neutral; it was biased, and in the courtroom, my case was postponed. The actions of CRD skewed the scales of justice, leaving me to contend alone against both Southgate Bend and the very agency that was sworn to protect victims. The Civil Rights Department's mission is to protect Californians from discrimination. Yet in practice, they betrayed that mission, taking sides with the opposition and erasing the truth about degrading conditions inside Southgate Bend.

Oakland, CA – October 28, 2025 – Carol Denise Mitchell, award-winning author and advocate, has released documented evidence showing that the California Civil Rights Department

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(CRD) communicated critical case information to Southgate Bend while withholding it from her, the complainant.

On September 5, 2025, Judge Moraga remanded Mitchell's case after citing a closure date provided by CRD to Southgate Bend's Vice President—a date Mitchell herself never received. This unequal disclosure destroyed her small claims case and forced her withdrawal under biased terms.

In correspondence preserved for the record, CRD Staff Services Manager Sherman Smith confirmed Mitchell's signed October 27 withdrawal note was included in the case file "without alteration." Yet Mitchell's demand for equal disclosure was ignored, leaving her to fight alone against both Southgate Bend and the very agency sworn to protect victims, The Civil Rights Department, (CRD).

"My withdrawal was not a settlement. It was forced by CRD's unequal disclosure to the respondent. Their silence was not impartial—it was bias," Mitchell stated. "The Civil Rights Department's mission is to protect Californians from discrimination. In practice, they betrayed that mission, siding with my opponent and erasing the truth about degrading conditions inside Southgate Bend."

Mitchell has vowed to escalate the matter to Internal Affairs, the California Attorney General, and the media, framing her case as evidence of systemic misconduct within CRD.

BACKGROUND

The California Civil Rights Department (CRD), headquartered in Sacramento, is the state agency responsible for enforcing civil rights laws in employment, housing, businesses, and state-funded programs. Its mission is *“to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination... and from bias-motivated violence and human trafficking.”*

Mitchell’s case demonstrates a stark contradiction between CRD’s stated mission and its actual conduct. By withholding information from the complainant while sharing it with the respondent, CRD undermined the integrity of the process and violated the principle of equal access to justice.

Sardenia's shortcomings as the investigator in my sexual harassment case are evident. Sardenia's Failure: As the primary decision-maker regarding my case, the Analyst was responsible for overseeing all communications related to me, which she failed to do. In the interest of transparency, she ought to have reprimanded Trumpet and Badbone for their responses to a dummy email, yet she chose not to. Consequently, CPPA sent me a letter indicating that they would initiate an investigation against Southgate Bend. Had CRD's investigator Sardenia been diligent in her responsibilities, Lopes would have also been implicated in the COO's breach of privacy allegations against me, as he was involved

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in that situation as well. CRD's Complicity: By neglecting to take action, the CRD effectively endorsed the ongoing email breach and discrimination I faced prior to the legal withdrawal of my case. This illustrates the connection between corporate misconduct (Badbone/Trumpet) and institutional neglect (CRD/Sardenia). I found myself in a significant struggle that I had to confront alone. Sardenia's position as the investigator/Analyst in my sexual harassment case should have compelled her to intervene and prevent Badbone and Trumpet from improperly sharing my personal information with a fraudulent email. Instead, she permitted this behavior, and Joe Lopes, to whom she provided incriminating evidence against me, was allowed to proceed, further implicating the Civil Rights Department in their initiative to undermine my CRD and Small Claims case.

SILENCE

No one associated with the Civil Rights Department responded to my letters or returned my calls, not even those in CRD Leadership. Their analyst had become excessively aggressive, seemingly more focused on undermining me than on addressing legitimate concerns. I understand this may have been an unprecedented situation for the Civil Rights Department. Despite my numerous letters requesting the replacement of Sardenia, her superiors blatantly ignored my pleas. I felt unworthy of their protection. Letters were dispatched, yet no replies were received. Phone calls were made, but there was no response. Multiple

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attempts to contact the CRD intake went unanswered. They appeared willing to permit Sardenia to evade accountability for sabotaging both my small claims case and the Civil Rights Division case. Do you require proof? I possess it. This is a letter I addressed to the head of CRD Leadership, and I must inform you in advance that he never replied to this correspondence.

(CRD)Cases in Point

Investigator Sardenia Santos repeatedly failed to handle my case with professionalism—misplacing medical release forms, ignoring critical calls, and escalating matters to the point where I required police intervention from the defendant, Southgate Bend (Report #LOP250130000481, January 30, 2025). These failures compel me to address leadership directly. She postponed communication and neglected to follow up on urgent issues, despite the emotional and physical strain this case imposed on me. While I was still seeking assistance regarding the numerous violations perpetrated against me by Sardenia and Southgate Bend, I sent the following letter to the Federal Coordination and Compliance Section-4Con Civil Rights Division

Professional TIMELINE of EVENTS

Timeline of Incidents at Northgate Terrace

September 7, 2024

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- **Sexual Harassment by Coby:** Refused to leave Carol's apartment and admitted that staff used to break into units and observe tenants NAKED in compromising situations and that Maintenance was known for this. Maintenance attempted to break into my unit in July 2024, but my wheelchair safeguarded the door. Northgate refuses to reprimand or punish the offenders. ***CRD ignored this event***
- Carol filed a formal complaint with the **California Civil Rights Department (CRD)**.

October 2, 2024

- **Meeting with Regional Manager:** She confirmed belief in Carol's sexual harassment report and promised, "*I will make sure he does not hurt you again.*" ***Sardenia left this out of her findings***

November 2, 2024

- **Illegal Security Deposit Demand:** Management (Belinda B.) demanded via email that a \$353 deposit within the 90-day protection period be made after Carol filed her CRD complaint. Carol cited the law/violation and issued a cease and desist. Management stopped asking. ***CRD Sardenia left this out of her findings***

December 12, 2024

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- **Violation of Protective Agreement:** Coby committed another violation, witnessed on the floor by SB Coordinator, a South Bend employee, which Carol reported to Mr. Lopes, CRD. No response at all from management, not even from The Civil Rights Department.

January 30, 2025

- **Elevator Incident:** (Lead Maintenance) verbally attacked, assaulted Carol in a closed elevator. In accordance with Community rules and guidelines, Carol told Manager, Mandy immediately when she rolled her wheelchair to her office. Mandy yelled at Carol and kicked her out of her office, and defended maintenance was a good employee; she defended him and yelled at Carol in the office, forcing Carol to call the police. Mr. Lopes never responded to this emergency; he did not return Carol's email or the appropriate internal incident forms she requested for this matter. It was all ignored.
- **Police Report Filed:** #LOP250130000481.
- Mandy later apologized, saying she forgot her medication.

March 4, 2025

- Carol forwarded her December 14, 2024, email to CRD regarding harasser's violation.

July 7, 2025

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- **CRD Contact:** Sardenia requested South Bend's response to Carol's December 14 email.
- Carol learned that Mr. Lopes had a CRD document detailing a possible end date for the investigation. He presented this to the judge after arbitration on 9/5/2025 and CRD gave South Bend an unfair hand over Carol as they withheld this information from her.

September 5, 2025

- **Court-Ordered Mediation:** Carol rejected a \$5,000 relocation offer due to her disability and past homelessness.
- **Mr. Lopes Admitted Retaliation:** Said the 11th floor is not cleaned due to Carol's complaint.

Ongoing Issues & Impact

Neglect & Retaliation

- Trash chute closures and unsanitary conditions.
- Rent increase after filing CRD complaint.
- Refusal to clean the 11th floor.
- Emotional exhaustion during arbitration (Carol fell asleep at the table).

Discrimination by CRD

- Sardenia failed to return calls from vital witnesses.

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- Lost Carol's signed medical release form multiple times.
- Withheld legal documents that affected the judge's decision in small claims court.

Unresponsiveness by Ownership

- Badbone has not responded to Carol's letters or intervened in retaliation and neglect. By law it's my civil duty and in accordance with South Bend's Community rules to utilize management contacts to be precise and abide by community rules and report all matters despite management being weary of my emails.

Medical & Emotional Toll

- Kaiser placed Carol on a **suicide prevention plan** after the Harassment incident.
- Therapy required; documented by **Dr. Neal Patel** and **Rebecca Mossier**.

South Gate manager attempted to cover up the VP's retaliatory admission in arbitration by sending me an email claiming the floor is cleaned daily and she instructed me not to contact executives which I believe was an attempt for the manager to rewrite the record.

On October 27, 2025, I submitted my formal withdrawal from CRD Case #202412-27398913. My withdrawal

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cited Judge Moraga's minutes, which confirmed that CRD disclosed a closure date to Southgate Bend's Vice President but withheld it from me. This unequal disclosure blindsided me in court and forced the dismissal of my small claims case.

In an effort to help the Civil Rights Division keep track of my case I created Supplemental forms for Sardenia. Neither the Civil Rights Department or Sardenia replied to my updates on the case.

Re: Supplemental Impact Statement – Pattern of Retaliation and Misconduct by Northgate Terrace Staff

Dear Ms. Sardenia,

I am submitting this supplemental letter to be added to my open case with the California Civil Rights Department regarding the ongoing discrimination, retaliation, and neglect I have endured as a disabled tenant at South Bend Apartments.

While I understand the CRD investigation is still underway, I feel compelled to document the cumulative and escalating pattern of misconduct by South Bend Management. Their actions, taken individually and collectively, have created a hostile and unsafe living environment for me as a wheelchair user and long-term tenant.

1. Mr. Lopes – Retaliatory Admission

On September 5, 2025, during court-ordered mediation, Mr. Rivera openly admitted in front of the arbitrator that the 11th floor is not being cleaned because of my complaint. This admission is not only retaliatory but dangerous,

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as it confirms that management is willfully neglecting sanitation in response to my protected activity. I immediately requested that cleaning resume, but the damage was done.

2. Manager's – Contradictory and Dismissive Conduct

Just hours after Mr. Lope's admission, Mandy sent an email falsely claiming that the 11th floor is cleaned daily and instructed me not to contact executive leadership. This appears to be a coordinated attempt to rewrite the record and undermine my credibility. Her email contradicts Rivera's statement and reflects a pattern of gaslighting and obstruction.

3. Repeated Violations and Harassment

*The harasser, a staff member who admitted he is not a licensed electrician, made a sexually inappropriate comment to me during a power outage on September 7, 2024. Despite a directive issued on October 16, 2024, barring him from the 11th floor, he was seen outside my apartment on December 12, 2024, as witnessed by South bend's Activities Director. I reported this immediately, and no one from management ever responded. This silence speaks volumes. **(The Civil Rights Department and Sardenia ignored this finding).***

4. Emotional and Medical Toll

These incidents have caused me significant emotional distress, requiring both medical and psychiatric care. I have lived in fear of retaliation, unsanitary conditions, and further violations of my rights. As a disabled tenant with a

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history of homelessness, I should not have to endure this level of neglect and hostility.

5. Request for Escalation and Accountability

I respectfully request that this letter be added to my case file and that the CRD consider the totality of these actions as part of a broader pattern of discrimination and retaliation. I also ask that the CRD consider whether a formal review or escalation of my case is warranted, given the severity and duration of these issues.

Thank you for your time and continued attention to this matter. I remain committed to cooperating fully with the investigation and hope that justice will prevail.

The Civil Rights Department and the analyst ignored this request!

Also, I would like to point out that you failed to return a vital phone call regarding my case. That missed communication could have provided clarity and documentation essential to the judge's decision. Instead, the absence of that follow-up contributed to the judge postponing the case until March 2026. I also learned in court that Mr. Mr. Lopes was in possession of a document from your office that I was never sent. This, combined with the repeated loss of my signed medical release form, has created a pattern of omissions that cannot be ignored.

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As a disabled tenant and advocate, I have worked diligently to preserve every piece of evidence and correspondence. These setbacks have placed an undue burden on me and have undermined my trust in the Civil Rights Department investigative process. I am therefore requesting a replacement investigator who can provide the transparency, consistency, and accountability this case requires.

I respectfully ask that you acknowledge this request and confirm the next steps for reassignment. I remain committed to working with the Civil Rights Department to ensure justice is served, and I hope this transition will allow for a more effective and respectful process moving forward.

Fri, Sep 5 at 12:33 PM

Subject: Request for Case Update and Equal Access to Documents

Dear Ms. Sardenia,

During mediation and court proceedings on **September 5, 2025**, Mr. Lopes referenced paperwork indicating that a decision from the Civil Rights Department is expected around December. I just wanted to let you know that I haven't received any such update or documentation. I respectfully request a copy of all correspondence and documents shared with South Bend management regarding my case, to ensure I have equal access to information. Additionally, the **judge concluded that the case will be continued until the Civil Rights Department issues its**

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decision. I am committed to pursuing my claims and appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Carol Denise Mitchell

Note: The Civil Rights Department and Sardenia did not respond to this letter.

Sun, Sep 7 at 3:08 PM

Dear Ms. Sardenia,

As a follow-up to your inquiry, I am forwarding the original December 14, 2024 email I sent to South Bend management regarding The Harasser's violation of the October 16 directive. This email includes the eyewitness account from the eye-witness Coordinator and documents my emotional distress and safety concerns.

Important Updates:

- I have confirmed that **no one responded** to this email, despite the regional manager's instruction to contact her if further incidents occurred.
- Management was aware that **the harasser was not a qualified electrician**, yet allowed him to enter my unit during the September 7, 2024 outage, during which he made a sexually inappropriate comment.

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- Had I known the harasser was unqualified and had a criminal record, I would never have allowed him into my apartment.
- These events have caused ongoing emotional harm and required medical and psychiatric care.

I have preserved this email as **Exhibit A** in my small claims binder and am submitting it to you for formal documentation.

Please let me know if you need any additional materials.

Sincerely,

Carol Denise Mitchell

Note: The Civil Rights Department and Sardenia did not respond to this letter.

12/12/2024 Incident ignored by The Civil Rights Department and Sardenia to favor my opponent!

Documented proof that the harasser violated the Regional Manager's order. The Civil Rights Department and Sardenia denied and overlooked all of this evidence to side with the Defendant and Not me. I was their client. I was not protected.

On October 16, 2024

South Bends Regional Manager assured me in a letter that the staff member the subject of my sexual harassment complaint, who asked me if my vibrator caused an electrical outage on September 07, 2024, said this harasser ***"Is not allowed to service***

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the 11th floor alone and must be accompanied by another employee. Since then, I have seen the said harasser service this floor (ALONE) several times, and I tried to cope with it. I have seen him standing at the end of my hallway waiting for me to exit my apartment. Then, he races out the back door stairwell.

On 12/12/2024

The South Bend Coordinator visited my unit around 1:30 PM (she witnessed The Harasser next to my door alone!)

During this visit, I informed her about the incidents of sexual harassment and how the Regional Manager stated that the harasser was only permitted to be on this floor in the company of another service worker. There have been multiple instances when the harasser came to the 11th floor unaccompanied, as was the case today, and on 12/12/2024, the harasser was observed by South Bend's Coordinator. On that same date, after The Activities Director left to check on me, she called me back around 1:45 PM to inform me that she had seen the harasser loitering 'alone' next to my apartment while using his phone. Such occurrences make it intimidating for me to enter or exit my unit. Initially, I refrained from mentioning that I had seen him alone, but this morning, on 12/14/2024 (Saturday), someone unlocked my door. Subsequently, I heard someone exit through the fire escape. If the harasser has access to or possesses keys to my unit, please inform me so that I can take measures to protect myself. I am currently undergoing counseling for these issues, and my therapist has advised me to

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maintain no contact with the harasser. You assured me that this would not occur. I have attempted to approach the situation with understanding, but he continues to breach your protective measures, as confirmed by South Bend's Activities Coordinator. This individual has an unhealthy fixation on me and should be terminated from his position. If this does not happen, I may be compelled to pursue legal action. Sardenia and The Civil Rights Department have disregarded this crucial information pertaining to my case, further demonstrating that The Civil Rights Department has caused more harm to my case than the aggressors themselves. This book will hold The Civil Rights Division in Sacramento, California accountable for their discrimination against me in my claim against South Bend Terrace. The negligence exhibited by the Civil Rights Department represents a significant failure. I have meticulously documented all of this in my book to illustrate how The Civil Rights Department, along with their analysts and the entire department, failed to assist me in safeguarding my civil rights. Instead, they contributed to the stress, trauma, and distress I experienced throughout this entire ordeal.

Reflection

What struck me the most was not merely the omissions themselves, but the ensuing silence. I sought transparency, a reassignment of Sardenia, and fairness. No one replied. That silence was not coincidental—it was intentional. It revealed to me that Sardenia, her supervisors, and even The Director had already made their choices. My fears and tears went unanswered. My determination remained

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unchanged. I had to prioritize my safety. The Civil Rights Department was more adversarial towards me than the apartment complex over which I initially filed this case. Consequently, each letter that went unanswered became evidence of complicity, and each omission represented another brick in the wall of bias. For me, the silence resonated louder than any words. As a 70-year-old complainant with the Civil Rights Department, I required protection. I was not going to receive it from the very institution established to safeguard me. They discriminated against me more severely than Bridgeway, CUIAB, and Dr. Norman combined. My next course of action was to file a complaint. My Consumer Complaint against the Civil Rights Department Sardenia Santos 10/18/25 7:29 AM Public Inquiry Unit the CRD investigator assigned to my case, Sardenia, issued a closure letter that disregarded significant evidence I provided, which included witness statements, legal references, and documented instances of retaliation. Her handling of the case was biased and dismissive, putting my safety at risk. I did not purchase any product or service, nor did I sign a contract; however, I interacted with the CRD as a complainant seeking protection and justice under California Civil Rights laws. I am requesting a formal review of the investigation conducted by CRD investigator Sardenia. I affirm that the information provided above is true and accurate.



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

A Black Panther

Precisely two months and twenty days after the courtroom betrayals at South Bend and the Civil Rights Department, where the Vice President of South Bend admitted on record his discriminatory actions against me related to my civil rights case filed in September 2024, I came across a familiar individual at the South Bend Senior Homes. David resided on the same property I had been litigating against for a year. He was aware of the circumstances that resulted in the legal consequences and filings pertaining to my case.

On November 25, 2025, at 1:30 PM, I found myself walking alongside history: David Hilliard, the founder of the Black Panther Party. One of the most significant statements made by David Hilliard was that racism began in 1619 in Jamestown. I spoke with David Hilliard today — a founding member of the Black Panther Party, a man whose name still carries the weight of a movement. It's cold and raining today in Oakland, California. I rolled inside the gate

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and up to David. Dressed in grey slacks and a black shirt we met with a fist pump. We talked for over an hour. His voice was softer now, his body showing the years, but the mind was still sharp, still rooted in the struggle that shaped him and shaped this country.

“Where’s your doggie?” I asked him.

“My grandson has him. You know that boy is smart. He gets “A’s.” in everything!” Hilliard, the proud grandfather said.

At one point, I asked him a question that had lived in me since I was sixteen: Where did racism begin, and where does it end?

He didn’t hesitate.

“1619. Jamestown.”

The simplicity of Hilliard’s answer struck me. The precision. The way it aligned perfectly with the warning my mother gave me when I was a girl — a warning about the world I was stepping into, a world built on a date and a place that still echoes through every institution we touch.

David is aging now. His body betrays him in ways his spirit never will. But even in that moment — frail, human, unguarded — he was still the legend. Still the historian. Still the witness. I listened closely, gathering every thread of insight he offered, knowing I was sitting with a man who had lived the truth most people only read about.

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His words, especially that single, anchoring answer — 1619. Jamestown. — In 1619 in Jamestown marked a pivotal moment with the first recorded arrival of enslaved Africans in English North America, who were sold for supplies, initiating centuries of race-based bondage. A key event during that period was the arrival of Africans in late August, when the English privateer White Lion brought '20 and odd' enslaved West Central Africans (from present-day Angola) to Point Comfort (near modern-day Hampton, VA). They were traded for food, signifying the commencement of American slavery. What prompted David's remark to evoke memories of the meeting in the hallway when my mother stated that the white man will never accept you? It is because slavery began in Jamestown. The repercussions of that day continue to resonate within black communities even now.

None of what happened in Jonestown was lost on David Hilliard! Today, this iconic figure stood before me — not merely as a character from textbooks, but as my neighbor. He is someone I had interviewed the previous year in a story that received global recognition of which you will read more about later, in this novel. The narrative made headline news and served as a reminder that I must not permit anyone to stifle my truths or my character. At the age of 81—slender, weighing around 170 pounds, with a long, narrow face, silver hair, and a flicker of fire still present in his eyes—my teenage idol looked at me with the calmness of a man who has carried the weight of many generations. Before 2024, I last encountered Mr. Hilliard on August 28, 1989, at Allen Temple

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Baptist Church. More than a thousand individuals gathered for the celebration and farewell party for the co-founder of the Black Panther Party. Fellow activist H. Rap Brown remarked that Newton paid the price for his fight against black oppression. Hilliard briefly spoke about Huey Newton. "The good die young," he offered to my nod. I had come from the corner store. I rolled up to Hilliard in my wheelchair feeling the rarity of being in his presence. Seeing him again was awesome! He was happy to see me. We traded the monumental black power hand shake. Looking good at 81, Hilliard was lucid and in great spirits. He then stated, "You have my permission, Carol. What did you think I was doing when your video became popular last year? "I was completely cognizant of my actions," he stated. David's grandson confronted me about that viral video. David's family and the media across the nation made my life difficult. I stood firm, as I have always done in all my battles, because one does not yield to appeasement, one does not apologize for the truth, and one does not take on the blame for failures that are not one's own, when guided by honesty and integrity. I was assured that David was fully aware of what he conveyed to me in that video, irrespective of the eventual outcome and his family's assertions regarding Mr. Hilliard's dementia. Furthermore, I discovered something today.

Before the world knew him as a controversial elder, David Hilliard was the engine behind one of the most radical movements in American history. As Chief of Staff of the Black Panther Party, he was not just a soldier of justice—he was its architect. Born in

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Alabama in 1942 and raised in Oakland, Hilliard co-founded the Party alongside Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, helping transform it from a local patrol group into a national force for Black liberation. He organized survival programs, coordinated national chapters, and managed the day-to-day operations that kept the movement alive under relentless government pressure.

Hilliard was the strategist who made the revolution run. While Huey Newton was the visionary and Bobby Seale the orator, David was the one who kept the gears turning. His work extended beyond protesting helped build free breakfast programs, health clinics, and educational initiatives that served thousands. His legacy is not just in speeches or slogans, but in the infrastructure of care and resistance that defined the Panthers' mission.

When I finally encountered David Hilliard, I appeared as a 70-year-old woman engaged in a sexual harassment lawsuit against a janitor on the property grounds of a building many called a slum for seniors. You will find more details about this later in the book. However, I must first address the innocent video that unexpectedly gained viral attention, for which I was neither prepared nor appropriately attired for the limelight. God knows that if I had any ill intentions during my interview with the founder of the Black Panthers, I would have at least taken the time to comb my hair, apply some makeup, and conceal the fact that I was not in a wheelchair. The esteemed employment advocate, Carol Denise Mitchell, was indeed in a wheelchair. Yet, I faced numerous accusations from

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David's family. They attempted to label me as an AI writer, claiming that none of my works were genuine, all while spewing nonsense from their mouths regarding an interview in which David Hilliard discussed Donald Trump. Nine months after initiating my case against our apartment complex, on June 2, 2024, I met David Hilliard in our courtyard. At that moment, I had no knowledge of who Mr. Hilliard was. He was seated on a bench, and as a Trump supporter, I struck up a conversation with the legendary figure, still unaware of his identity at that time.

The Viral Interview

It was June 2, 2024, I recall the events of this day very well. I stepped outside the stiff sliding glass door relaxed, looking like a damn fool in a wheelchair wearing a blue sweatshirt, no makeup, cell phone in hand not imagining that in a few minutes my life would change I had just moved into Southgate Bend Senior Homes, something extraordinary unfolded.

By the time I sat down with David Hilliard, he was no longer the man behind the curtain—he was the elder statesman of a movement that had shaped my own voice. I approached him with reverence, knowing that his words carried the weight of history. What followed was an interview that shook the earth—and shook my world.

Hilliard, then 81, shared reflections that were raw, unfiltered, and deeply personal. He spoke about Donald J. Trump, about

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Harlem, and about his own memories of the past. His words sparked a firestorm—drawing praise, outrage, and consequences I could not have predicted.

Recalling my experience as a reporter for Soul Beat, I had interviewed hundreds of people over the years. I knew not to mislead anyone into saying something generated from my opinion. Chauncey Bailey trained me for weeks on how to conduct interviews. So, when it came to putting the Mic up to one's mouth, I did not mislead anyone. On that fateful day, I introduced him in the video with reverence: *"I want you to meet someone who knew Donald Trump, and he's going to tell you about Trump in his own words."* What followed was testimony—his testimony. He described Trump as "a friend of African Americans," recalled him as "a decent man," and spoke of support he believed the Panthers had received.

During our exchange, Hilliard made statements that startled many viewers. At one point, he said:

"Trump is a person who's a decent man, and he supported the Black Panther Party." "Trump is a friend of African Americans."

These remarks, clipped and circulated widely, became the centerpiece of the controversy. For many, the idea that a former leader of the Black Panther Party would praise Donald Trump seemed inconceivable. As an aging senior, I was too stunned to turn the camera off. Regardless of the outcome I had to let this man speak!

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The reaction was immediate. News outlets picked up the story, and social media erupted with debate. Within days, Hilliard's grandson, Eric Jones, issued a public statement clarifying that his grandfather suffers from dementia and that the video did not represent his true beliefs. Jones described the interview as misleading and harmful, calling it "senior abuse" and demanding that the clip be removed. But the fact of the matter is, David Hilliard was lucid. In no way did he ever disengage from the conversation. He was relaxed. I did not interrogate the Black Leader or tell him what to say.

The firestorm highlighted two things: the enduring sensitivity around the legacy of the Black Panther Party, and the volatile nature of political discourse in the digital age. What was intended as a conversation about history became a flashpoint for accusations of manipulation, misinformation, and exploitation. These are the facts. I interviewed David using my experience as a reporter. I was too old to lead anyone to say anything they did not want to say.

For me, as the interviewer, the episode underscored the responsibility that comes with documenting voices from the past. It showed how easily context can be lost when a few sentences are lifted from a longer discussion, and how quickly narratives can spiral once they enter the echo chamber of social media.

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He authored several books, including *Speak, Brother! A Black Man's View of America* and *White Fear: How the Browning of America is Making White Folks Lose Their Minds*. His work earned multiple NAACP Image Awards and recognition from *Ebony Magazine* as one of the 150 Most Influential African Americans.

My reaction to all of this was stunned silence when Roland S. Martin, a respected voice in Black media, released a segment dissecting my interview with David Hilliard—without ever reaching out to me. As a fellow journalist and advocate, I had long admired his unapologetic stance, his commitment to truth, and his role in amplifying Black voices. But in that moment, I felt erased. I was not acknowledged for my craft, writing or the fact I am considered a literary icon in my own rights.

The video, which drew more than 64,000 views, framed my work as exploitative, leaning heavily on the claims of Hilliard's grandson while ignoring my intent, my history, and the reverence with which I approached the interview. It was painful to watch a man I considered a peer dismiss my integrity without a single phone call, email, or invitation to clarify.

I did not expect universal agreement. I expected dialogue. I expected the courtesy of consultation before condemnation. Roland's platform is powerful, and with that power comes responsibility—to investigate, to contextualize, and to honor the complexity of Black legacy.

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My interview with David Hilliard was not a stunt—it was a moment of truth between two survivors of history. To have that moment reduced to a headline and a takedown felt like a betrayal not only of me, but of the very principles we both claim to uphold.

I firmly support my work. I firmly uphold my truth. I will not be silenced by those who choose to ignore the complete context. Community responses were varied. Some viewers defended my right to document Hilliard's words as he expressed them, emphasizing that you introduced him with respect and allowed him to speak openly. Others believed the video was politically manipulated and misrepresented Hilliard's intentions. This controversy underscored generational conflicts regarding legacy, memory, and political allegiance. "Between the loud and the soft echoes lay my truth. I did not take advantage of David Hilliard. I recorded a significant moment. And I will not permit anyone—regardless of their power—to diminish the dignity of that exchange." The worst of the Hilliard Interview by Carol Denise Mitchell: Source: The Daily Beast June 5, 2024 Black Panthers Founder Does Not Endorse Trump, Grandson Asserts. "A rogue journalist disseminating false information has hurried to remove a video featuring a founding member of the Black Panther Party allegedly endorsing Donald Trump for president after the activist's grandson threatened to pursue a cease-and-desist order. Eric Jones clarified on social media that his 81-year-old grandfather, David Hilliard, is not a supporter of Trump and was misrepresented in the video due to his ongoing 'cognitive issues.' The video was uploaded to TikTok by Carol

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Mitchell on Sunday, according to the New York Post Leading Report, a site known for spreading misinformation, and was also shared on X. In a reposted version of the video, a Black woman, presumably Carol Mitchell, introduced Hilliard. 'I want you to meet someone who knew Donald Trump, and he's going to share his thoughts about Trump in his own words,' Mitchell stated before handing the camera to Hilliard. 'Because Trump appreciates Africans in America. He values Black individuals,' Hilliard responded. 'I believe Trump is quite qualified and respectable.'

Starry Eyes

Advocating for the Stars – How it all began

“You Hit the Home Run Off Terry Forster!

On October 3, 1982, Joe Morgan hit a three-run home run off Dodgers reliever Terry Forster at Candlestick Park, a blast that knocked Los Angeles out of the pennant race on the final day of the season and a moment that would literally come back to haunt me at a Burger King in downtown Oakland, California. The Giants had nothing to gain, but Morgan's swing ended the Dodgers' hopes and handed the division to the Atlanta Braves. It remains one of the most painful moments in Dodgers history and a topic I would not soon forget when I actually met Joe Morgan one day in downtown Oakland.

One afternoon, a long black limousine pulled up at 14th and Broadway, right in front of the Burger King. The door flew open and out jumped Joe Morgan — yes, that Joe Morgan, the Hall of

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Famer, the man who hit the home run off Terry Forster that knocked my Dodgers out of the pennant race. Since the old days of being in The Dungeon, I was a Dodgers fan to my core, so the irony wasn't lost on me.

Fans swarmed him instantly, pushing pens and napkins at him, shouting his name, begging for autographs. He had to talk through the crowd just to keep his eyes on me.

What I didn't understand then — what I only see now — is that this was another moment in a long line of moments where powerful men, cultural figures, and historical personalities crossed my path. These were iconic figures you watch quietly without telling them how you hit a home that changed my team's destiny.

This was before Twanna Turner sent me her music. Before Debi Thomas trusted me with her truth. But the pattern was already there. I just didn't know how to read it yet.

The building where I met Joe Morgan is boarded up. At 70 I rolled up to it again to remember that day and recall how I could barely speak to this Hall-of-Fame icon over a stupid home run. Burger King isn't even there anymore, but that corner of 14th and Broadway still lives in my memory. In the 80s Oakland's Black population peaked at about 47% making it a place where many Black residents felt a strong sense of community. Only a week after Joe Morgan jumped out of that limousine to have a burger at Burger King, I showed up for the special awards event he gave for Frank Robinson. Joe invited my husband and I to this event. I expected nothing more than a polite nod from across the room. My husband

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stepped away to the restroom, and the moment Joe saw me from the stage, I could not believe how he raced down to greet me. “I can’t believe you’re here,” he said, smiling with a warmth that felt almost boyish. The room was full, but in that instant, it was as if the crowd fell away.

Later, my husband greeted the sports giant giving Joe the same recognition I had a week ago. Only he was a Giants fan. I will never forget the way Joe recalled me all over a homerun he hit that took the Dodgers out of the pennant race. In no way did I interact with Morgan the way I would Ike Turner’s daughter, Tawanna or Word Figure Skating Champion, Debi Thomas. Here’s where I had brought out my celebrity advocacy ears and tools!



CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Celebrities

Tawanna Turner

Tawanna Turner, who is also known as Twanna Turner, is the offspring of Ike Turner. I had the honor of meeting her and advocated for her father on my YouTube channel to highlight her loving view of him. Although I am a devoted fan of Tina Turner, I captured Tawanna Turner's attention through the positive videos I produced about Ike Turner. Throughout my life, I have met many public figures, and Twanna remains one of my favorite entertainers. Her singing ability is on par with legends like Aretha Franklin and Gladys Knight; when I say this woman possesses remarkable vocal skills, I genuinely mean it, because I received her initial samples of her music via my professional email. We visited each other's homes, and I conducted an interview with her regarding her father for my YouTube channel. She passionately advocated for him. Currently, she is alive and serves as the CEO of an interior design firm named Elegance 2 AT Decors. Tawanna is the biological daughter of Ike Turner and Pat Richard. Although I

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did not have the opportunity to meet Tawanna's mother, she shared a wealth of information about her father. Ike Turner resided with Tawanna following his release from prison in 1991. Both Tawanna and her daughter, Heather Sweet, appeared on the show *Unsung* in 2015, which focused on 'The Story of Ike Turner.' Getting to know Tawanna has taught me the importance of advocating for loved ones. She has consistently been a prominent public figure, diligently advocating for her father's musical legacy in the most committed manner possible. I recall receiving an email from Tawanna on a particular date, which affirmed her commitment to her father's legacy. The content of this email communication deserves special attention in *The Advocate for Justice & Moral Compassion*, as it underscores the views of iconic stars. On Mon, Sep 21, 2015, at 6:31 PM, I received an email from Tawanna. I contacted Tawanna to determine the urgency of the email, and she stated: "I am advocating for my father. Read the email." I was thrilled to receive this information directly from Ike Turner's own daughter. As an admirer of both Ike and Tina Turner, I had no intention of questioning a woman who was defending her father. I am merely the messenger. This is the exact email that was sent to me by Ike Turner's daughter. Truly remarkable!

Phil Spector Rips Tina at Ike Turner's Funeral

Spector, as reported by our informant at the Greater Bethany Community Church in Gardena, California, was one of several notable attendees, including Bonnie Raitt and Little Richard, who came together to bid farewell to the Grammy-winning artist. "I

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deeply regret that I was not ready to deliver any remarks," stated the slender and frail music producer. "I had not been informed that I would be speaking. This is an extremely sorrowful event for me."

Spector spoke at length, yet he had valid points to convey. Here they are, for better or worse: "To begin with, the remarks made about Ike, which were featured in that dreadful film they produced about him, were ... (applause), it was indeed a dreadful film. I have not viewed the film myself, but I have been informed about it, and [Barney] Kessel was the finest guitar player in the world, and the sole reason Ike did not perform on 'River Deep, Mountain High' was that Ike was the second finest guitar player in the world. I held him in high regard, and everyone recognized it except Ike. That is how exceptional he was.

B.B. King once shared with me at a gathering attended by Doc Promus, Joe Turner, and Ray Charles that Ike Turner was the sole guitarist he would not perform behind. This speaks volumes about Ike's exceptional talent. However, Ike was never one to boast. He would accompany me to parties, and I would urge him to play, yet he would always decline.

"Ike had the ability to outplay Eric Clapton, and Eric was well aware of this fact. On one occasion, someone inquired about the distinction between Ike Turner and Eric Clapton. I responded, 'You cannot discern the difference between Eric Clapton and Ike Turner? That's amusing; why not ask Eric himself? He knows.' "Ike was instrumental in shaping Tina into the star she became. When I attended one of Ike's performances at the Cin Grill in the 1990s,

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following his unjust imprisonment, which stemmed solely from the color of his skin in America, I observed, and counted, at least five performers on stage that night who could have easily been Tina Turner. "As for Oprah Winfrey, whom I have mixed feelings about despite her popularity and the respect she commands, she played a significant role in turning Tina Turner's autobiography into a bestseller, which unfortunately portrayed Ike in a negative light. The book would have likely sold only a handful of copies had it not been for Oprah's influence. It was poorly written and lacked substance, yet Oprah, in her admiration for Tina, did not hesitate to vilify a fellow 'brother.' "Other black women have similarly treated Ike unfairly, and there is a well-known anecdote involving Whoopi Goldberg, who briefly hosted a television show, interviewing Ike. Ike had reached out to me, asking, 'Should I participate in the show?'

I stated, 'You cannot sustain any harm.' To which he replied, 'Alright, I will proceed with it.' "We believed it would be beneficial since it involves Whoopi, and Whoopi inquired, 'I comprehend that prior to your marriage, while cohabiting, you severely abused her, leading her to attempt suicide out of fear, even trying to leap from a window.' Ike responded, 'Indeed, but it is quite challenging to jump from a window when situated on a basement floor.'" "There was only one Ike. I gained more knowledge from Ike than from any of the professors I have encountered. He never caused me any trouble. He never intruded upon my affairs. He never obstructed my path." "When we produced 'River Deep Mountain High,' critics claimed

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that it was impossible to associate Ike and Tina's names with that record. They argued it would not sell because they belonged to rhythm and blues, while it was a pop record. I insisted that I had signed Ike and Tina Turner, and it would not even mention featuring Tina Turner; it would simply state Ike and Tina Turner." Spector expressed that part of his disenchantment with the music industry stemmed from his inability to elevate Ike and Tina to the prominence he envisioned. "I aspired for them to become the most significant revue in America. They were the first act I recorded that had the potential to perform on a grand scale and succeed in Las Vegas and across America."

Regardless of individual opinions, I admire Tawanna's dedication to advocating for her father, an American icon in US history. She often features in social media posts and media clips that celebrate Ike Turner's legacy, frequently sharing photographs and engaging in initiatives that humanize his narrative. Tawanna considers herself an inspirational speaker and is actively involved in managing matters related to the Turner family estate. As one of Ike Turner's several children, she has half-siblings, including Mia Turner (the daughter of Ike and Margaret Ann Thomas), Michael Turner, Ike Turner Jr. (who tragically passed away in October 2025), and Ronnie Turner (who died in 2022).

In one of our last communications, On September 11, 2015, at 7:53 PM, Twanna Turner — daughter of Ike Turner — sent me the remix of her song "My Lament." In her message she wrote, "Hello Sweeties... I upped the volume level a little for clarity. Can you let

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me know which one is better, the original or the remix? Thank you. Muah!!” I liked them both. We met for lunch.

That email, casual in tone yet profound in meaning, marked the moment her creative legacy intersected with mine. Artists and cultural heirs do not share their work lightly. Twanna’s decision to send me her music — not just to hear it, but to evaluate it — was an act of trust, recognition, and alignment. But my bigger role to advocate for her father to me, was natural. It affirmed the role I have come to occupy: the person people turn to when they want their truth handled with care, discernment, and historical respect.

The file she sent, *My Lament 2015 – REMIX*, a 10.4 MB mp3, became part of my archive that night — another thread in the tapestry of cultural history I still maintain the song in my archives.

Who was the great Ike Turner/Tawanna Turner’s father?

Ike Turner was one of the earliest architects of what the world would come to call rock and roll. As a teenage bandleader in Mississippi, he formed the Kings of Rhythm and developed a hard-driving, electrified blend of blues, boogie, and rhythm-and-blues that pushed the music into new territory. In 1951, Turner and his band recorded “Rocket 88,” a track widely recognized by historians and even the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame as a leading contender for the first rock and roll record. Though the single was credited to vocalist Jackie Brenston, the sound, arrangement, and band were Ike’s creation—marking him as a foundational figure in the birth of the genre.

Beyond that milestone, Turner’s influence shaped the entire early landscape of rock and roll. He worked as a talent scout and

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producer, discovering and developing artists like B.B. King and Howlin' Wolf, and he built the Ike & Tina Turner Revue into one of the most explosive live acts of the 1960s and 1970s. His innovations in band leadership, guitar distortion, and rhythmic intensity helped define the sound that would later be popularized by others. Whatever else history holds, Ike Turner's role as a first—a pioneer whose work helped ignite rock and roll—remains an essential part of the music's origin story.

"I get emotional because in the beginning, Ike was very good to me."

-The legendary, Tina Turner



CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Debra Janine Thomas

I did not become acquainted with Debi Thomas through news articles or documentaries; rather, I got to know her personally starting in 2015, when our initial email correspondence opened an unexpected door for both of us. By 2016, our discussions had evolved into a true friendship—one founded on honesty, vulnerability, and a mutual comprehension of what it is like to be misrepresented by society. Long before I contemplated writing a book, I was there to listen to her, support her, and observe the individual behind the public image. Those early messages, phone calls, and check-ins—spanning 2015, 2016, and the subsequent years—provided me with insight into the authentic Debi Thomas, rather than the version distorted by media portrayal.

Debi Thomas's rise in figure skating was nothing short of historic. She became the 1986 World Champion, a two-time U.S. National Champion, and the 1988 Olympic bronze medalist, making her the first African American athlete to win a medal at the Winter Olympics. Her rivalry with Katarina Witt at the 1988 Calgary

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Games—famously called the Battle of the Carmens—cemented her place in sports history.

Thomas began skating at age five and entered her first competition at nine, quickly distinguishing herself as a prodigy whose discipline, artistry, and technical mastery reshaped expectations for Black athletes in winter sports.

Her medical career was equally groundbreaking. Even at the height of her skating fame, Thomas was pursuing her long-held dream of becoming a doctor, studying engineering at Stanford while competing internationally. She later earned her medical degree from Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in 1997, fulfilling the ambition she had declared at age five: to become both a champion skater and a physician. Drawn to orthopedics for its blend of mechanical problem-solving and human connection, Thomas built a career as an orthopedic surgeon, proving that her excellence extended far beyond the ice.

Debi and I maintained a friendship from 2016 to 2021! I defended my friend; I championed her cause, and by 2025, I achieved success. The individual who had led her into a situation of domestic violence, which necessitated my intervention, is no longer present, and Debi has taken back her life and her skating titles. I have triumphed. One of the most important individuals I have ever supported was the Olympic Champion, Ice Princess: Debra Janine Thomas. If you remain with me, I will recount how it all began. In the field of advocacy, we navigate various paths.

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From The Dungeon to the Soul Beat, we delve into our history as African Americans. We enter boardrooms, legal courts, and even engage with some of today's most prominent figures like Black Panthers David Hilliard and Ike Turner's daughter Twanna Turner. Being open and recognizing the need to assist someone is the essence of who I am. I knew many stars and I never excluded them from the desserts of my sheer care. That is the reality of the situation. Debi found herself in a vulnerable position, overwhelmed by a relationship that was emotionally and mentally exhausting, and she required someone who could see clearly when she was unable to. Our friendship was shared through constant email communications and in person meetings. I loved Debi Thomas and she loved me, at least she told me that in an email. Debi came to visit me on Camelback Road in Arizona, where we spent countless hours conversing, laughing, and attempting to make sense of her circumstances. Debi arrived with sandwiches and she is the first person to ever show me how to cook a pizza.

"You do not require a pan, Carol. Simply position the pizza on the rack," she remarked. Debi was also the first to identify the genuine issue with my knees that would eventually result in my use of a wheelchair a few years later. "You are experiencing difficulty bending that knee," my friend stated. "Indeed. How did you discern that?" I inquired of her: This is how she was aware. "Debi was not merely an Olympian — she was a board-certified orthopedic surgeon who had excelled in one of the most challenging fields in medicine." Hearing her diagnose my knee issues so clearly was not

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unexpected. In our quest to help her heal, we spent hours discussing her experiences with Jamie. Later, during that in-person meeting with Debi Thomas, she even tried to hypnotize me, and I was unable to convincingly pretend to comply to her satisfaction. Those moments were meaningful and provided me with a chance to rationalize a recurring theme. Debi listened attentively. She distanced herself from Jamie in those Adirondack mountains. Her willingness to listen to me was evidence of the trust we had built, a testament to my understanding of her beyond the media's depiction, and confirmation that she permitted me into the more personal aspects of her life.

Nonetheless, beneath the humor and extensive discussions, I became aware of the danger she was in. Consequently, I took action. I championed her safety, her stability, and her future. Presently, with no signs that she and Jamie remain engaged, the results are clear. To uncover the full story of how advocacy, friendship, and truth intertwined in our lives, you may refer to the sole official account of her biography: Debi Thomas What Really Happened.

On August 5, 2018, at 5:18 PM, Debi Thomas entrusted me with her Life Rights documents and expressed her desire for my protection because of her affection for me. She confided in me her legal agreements, her worries, and her aspirations, and she expressed gratitude for my assistance in completing work she claimed she “could not—and likely would not—have accomplished” without my support. The intention behind including my dear friend in this book is to offer readers a deep understanding of my emotions and to

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illustrate how my commitment to advocating for others was sincere and produced real outcomes. That recorded conversation with Debi remains in my heart as a testament to the warmth, trust, and mutual respect that characterized our friendship long before this book came into being. I wish for people to know unequivocally that I wrote *Debi Thomas What Really Happened* solely to help her escape a domestic violence situation and to highlight her legacy. I did not encounter Debi Thomas as a headline, a controversy, or a fallen icon—I met her as a woman navigating a life that was far more intricate than the world ever comprehended. Long before I considered writing a book, I recognized her as a friend: intelligent, hurt, humorous, astute, and profoundly human. Our discussions were interviews only as they pertained to the novel; otherwise, they were dialogues between two women who saw something familiar in one another—resilience forged by adversity, and a lifetime of being misinterpreted. It was during those quiet, candid moments that I understood the public had never been introduced to the true Debi Thomas. They had been presented fragments. I had been given the person.

What I didn't expect was how naturally advocacy would emerge from that friendship. I fought back with Jamie to leave her alone. I gave Debi reasons why she didn't have to be in such an abusive relationship with Jamie Looney. A bell went off. Debi Thomas never went back to Jamie Looney. I didn't set out to "save" Debi or to correct the record; I simply found myself standing beside someone who had been misrepresented, mishandled, and misjudged and

CAROL DENISE MITCHELL

abused for far too long. The more I learned, the more I understood that her story needed a witness who could hold it with accuracy, compassion, and truth. That realization is what shaped this book. It isn't just a biography—it's an act of advocacy, born from the moment I understood that being her friend meant stepping forward, documenting the truth, and ensuring her legacy is finally told with the dignity she deserves.

Debi was never the two-dimensional figure the media tried to package for public consumption. She was layered, restless, brilliant, wounded, analytical, spiritual, and fiercely committed to understanding the world on her own terms. And every so often, she would send me a message that revealed the full architecture of her mind — unfiltered, unguarded, and unafraid of being misunderstood.

One of those messages arrived in March of 2018. It wasn't a casual note. It was a manifesto disguised as an email, a window into the storm she had been navigating alone. In it, she explained the weight she carried: the misrepresentation, the isolation, the relentless scrutiny, and the frustration of watching her life reduced to a headline written by people who had never spoken to her.

Within the Black community, she stands as a pillar, a symbol, and a trailblazer whose narrative has yet to be shared with the depth, dignity, and truth it rightfully warrants. Debi is the first Black athlete to secure a medal at the Winter Olympics. • First Black U.S. figure skating champion. • First Black woman to earn a medal in ladies' singles at the World Championships. • One of the select few athletes

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to participate in the Olympics while pursuing a full-time engineering degree. On Sunday, March 31, 2019, during a quiet exchange, Debi expressed her agreement regarding the novel I was composing. At 5:58 PM, Dr. Debi Thomas — Olympic bronze medalist, surgeon, and one of the most intricate and misunderstood figures in the history of American sports — reached out to me once more from her personal account: Her messages consistently conveyed warmth, familiarity, and an unmistakably personal touch. She included her close circle — family, friends, and trusted reviewers — a gesture that positioned me not as an outsider, but rather within the room, among those she deemed safe. Just eight minutes later, at 6:05 PM, I responded from my AOL address with the same affection and ease that had naturally developed between us: Because when the moment arrived to pose the question that would define the next chapter of her legacy — “Debi, will you allow me to share your story?” — I was not approaching her as a journalist or an outsider. I was a genuine friend of one of the world’s most celebrated figures, and my attempts to assist her in escaping an abusive relationship with Jamie Looney had finally borne fruit. “By the time I stepped in, Debi’s relationship with Jamie had already deteriorated. Currently, there is no public indication that they remain engaged — a subtle affirmation that the advocacy she required was not only warranted but also effective.

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From the earliest conflicts of my existence, I discovered that survival necessitated combat. During my upbringing, I suffered abuse in The Dungeon torture chamber, with my knees aching yet my spirit unyielding. Subsequently, I encountered exploitation at the hands of a professional psychologist. Those experiences eradicated fear and imparted the lesson that truth holds greater value than inflamed anger. By the time I transitioned into a news reporter, I recognized that perseverance and thorough documentation were my most formidable tools. That perseverance propelled me into every confrontation. At the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board (CUIAB), I composed letters that compelled the removal of those humiliating reproduction machines labeled "Master" and "Slave." My advocacy led to their removal from the premises — a triumph against symbols of subjugation. When Bridgeway Capital Advisors instructed me to depart due to my race and to replace myself with a white woman deemed "more appealing" for the front office, I stood my ground. I contacted their Blackberries, placed my book *Your Rights: What the Employer Does Not Want You to Know* in their chairs, and stated unequivocally: if they did not reach a settlement that day, I would proceed to the Department of Labor and the EEOC. They settled within a day — \$40,000 and one year of COBRA coverage. Attorneys had declined to take my case, yet I demonstrated that persistence could accomplish what legal representation could not. Each of these victories laid the

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groundwork for my most significant battle: against the Civil Rights Department. By that time, I had no fear, no unforeseen challenges left to face. Even while in a wheelchair, I continued to be the fighter, the advocate. My documented successes — from enforcing accountability at CUIAB, to obtaining justice against Bridgeway, to installing cameras on all eleven floors of Southgate Bend — illustrated that advocacy transcends titles or institutions. It is fundamentally about refusing to be silenced. Let's take a look at how to keep your writing detailed. Integrity is key.



CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

It's Written

Letter One

Coming out of the significant betrayal by The Civil Rights Department,

I remained resolute in my fight. Regardless of the challenges presented by the final battle, one must never surrender. While victory may not be guaranteed in every confrontation, it is essential to stand firm in your defense. "You have one day." Those words resonated in my mind like an ultimatum from Clint Eastwood. At the age of seventy, weary from the betrayal of the Civil Rights Department and its silent supporters; after enduring years of harassment and retaliation, I had arrived at a juncture where the truth needed to pierce through the obstruction more sharply than ever. My letters transformed from mere appeals into instruments of survival. The battle over the South Bend Refrigerator was imminent. The Civil Rights Department had previously been there to support their favored defendant against me. Now, they found themselves isolated. One might assume that I would be fatigued and that my spirit would be diminished, and

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indeed, I was weary; however, my passion for justice remains unwavering. I speak the truth. When my truth is disregarded, it compels me to fight with even greater intensity. I fought so fiercely against CRD/South Bend that I was able to dictate the outcome. If I could not receive fair treatment, here is the singular defense that brought everything to a halt!

Letter Two

Subject: Mediation Statement and Request for Immediate Action

Dear Mr. Lopes,

During the mediation and my court trial on September 5, 2025, you indicated in the presence of the arbitrator—who confirmed her availability to testify—that maintenance has not been cleaning the 11th floor as a result of my complaint. I respectfully urge that the cleaning be reinstated without delay, as I have observed that the 11th floor has not been vacuumed or cleaned for a period of at least 6-8 weeks. While I recognize your irritation with my correspondence, it is essential for me to document significant issues, including retaliation and ongoing harassment. I declined your offer for relocation due to my disability, previous experiences of homelessness, and the need for stability in my current living situation. I remain dedicated to truthfully advancing my claims and will await the decision from the Civil Rights Department before taking any further steps. I hereby formally request that the cleaning of the 11th floor be resumed immediately.

Sincerely,

Carol Denise Mitchell

CAROL DENISE MITCHELL

Letter 3

Subject: Re: Trash Chute Closure and Accessibility Concerns

Good evening, Mr. Lopez, Thank you for your response. I would like to respectfully clarify several points:

Accessibility: The alternative trash disposal arrangement fails to accommodate residents with disabilities. This evening, I observed an elderly woman struggling to reach the outside can, similar to my own experience. I ultimately had to give up, and David kindly took the disposable boxes for me. As a wheelchair user, I can attest that accessing the exterior dumpsters—particularly the one located near the community garden—is not possible without assistance. This situation raises significant concerns regarding ADA compliance and equitable access for all tenants. Sanitation: The bins situated outside the trash chute rooms on each floor are legally required to remain closed; however, they lack lids. Although they may be lined with plastic, the absence of covers presents a health hazard, especially considering the volume and type of waste being disposed of. Open bins attract pests and contribute to unsanitary conditions, particularly near my unit where overflow has already occurred. Accuracy of Description: The dumpsters currently in use do not correspond to the description or photo provided in your email. I have attached a recent photo that illustrates the actual setup, which includes one uncovered brown bin and a black bin with a partially open lid. This arrangement does not reflect the sanitary or

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secure conditions that were described. Communication: To my knowledge, no direct notice was given to residents prior to the chute closures, aside from the sign posted on the door. If additional notices were distributed, they did not reach me or several other tenants I have spoken with, as I am not the only one expressing concern. Cultural foods produce strong odors, necessitating that disposed trash be properly sealed; otherwise, it renders a unit uninhabitable under the law. I appreciate the efforts to enhance the property, but I strongly urge management to consider the unique needs of disabled residents and to ensure that all temporary measures adhere to basic health and safety standards. I also request that

NOTE: I will persist in sending these emails to management in alignment with the community rules and guidelines established by Southgate Bend protocols. This action is not only my entitlement as a tenant but also a crucial measure of self-defense against all that I have unjustly suffered as an elderly woman who is physically constrained, emotionally exhausted, and battling both CRD and South Gate for equity—struggling for my existence here. On September 5, 2025, I fell asleep while awaiting the judge's entrance into the courtroom, drained from the emotional strain of arbitration. Mandy has shown that she is not trustworthy to manage these issues impartially—she defended Jose after he verbally attacked me, neglected to forward my in-house grievance report, and only offered an apology afterward, attributing it to forgotten medication. These behaviors are not characteristic of someone who

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should serve as the sole point of contact for significant safety issues. I am striving to remain in my home, not due to ignorance of the abuse, but because I understand the implications of sleeping on the ground. I implore you to listen to me completely—not partially—and to act in accordance with the principles of dignity, safety, and respect.



CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

ICY

There is an attorney located in South Bend who ought to have acted more responsibly. Her negligence extended beyond my refrigerator — it encompassed all aspects of her duties. Her failure to fulfill her responsibilities spanned from Sardenia, the CRD, to the falsehoods they propagated, to the COO and VP Trumpet who naively reacted to a fraudulent email regarding 'Carol Denise Mitchell,' disclosing personal details about the initial faulty refrigerator I had already contested. Alisha Torres was aware that I possessed incriminating evidence against her. She recognized that the CPPA had accepted my complaint against her COO and his VP for their response to that deceptive email. She understood that I had the documentation, the timeline, and the legal framework supporting my case. Yet, she still believed she could disregard my concerns. Consequently, I allotted her a single day. The following morning, Mandy personally visited my apartment — suddenly attentive, unexpectedly courteous, and keen to accommodate my

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needs. She installed a brand-new refrigerator herself, beaming as if she were auditioning for a commercial. 'How do you find it, Carol? Is it satisfactory? Does the color suit you? Could you please sign here and express something positive?' This situation is almost unbelievable. And now, it is claimed that she has been terminated. This issue transcended the mere appliance. It was fundamentally about accountability. It was about revealing a pattern of misconduct that extended from the reception area to the executive offices. It was about demonstrating that when a woman like me is cornered, I do not capitulate — I document, I escalate, and I prevail. The refrigerator was never merely an appliance. It marked the initial battleground, the first instance of denial, and the first evidence that silence was their chosen weapon. The staff maintained that everything was fine, holding onto the illusion that the refrigerator operated flawlessly. From the upper echelons, they deemed it preferable to communicate through a fictitious email rather than with me! However, the hum was empty, and the truth resonated louder. My bark indeed had its bite. This represents the conclusion of my most significant victory collection. The CPPA will scrutinize South Gate Bend's upper management, and I will conclude this chapter by presenting an ultimatum that may very well be the most impactful this world has ever witnessed! When the specialist arrived—unyielding, precise, and unimpressed by their attempts to evade responsibility—he confirmed what I had already suspected: the refrigerator was irreparably broken. Replacement was not a choice; it was unavoidable. This inevitability propelled me to write

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to Torres, South Gate Bend's general counsel. She aimed to protect her staff, to feign that compliance sufficed, to postpone the inevitable reckoning. Yet, advocacy does not pause. Advocacy does not yield. Advocacy insists. Thus, I articulated it clearly, without remorse: This refrigerator is broken. A specialist examined it. Here's his phone number. I am sick of playing games with you all!

I recall the day I entered that office in my wheelchair and informed them about the refrigerator. Mandy allowed me to converse with Chang Li for nearly an hour while she concealed herself in her office like a timid mouse. She never emerged. She never voiced her opinion. And Chang Li was dishonest. The office personnel were untruthful. The maintenance team was deceptive. All of them acted as if they possessed knowledge they did not have — and none of them were certified appliance experts. The risk associated with dishonesty is straightforward: if the tenant engages a licensed professional, every falsehood transforms into a documented falsehood. And when that occurs, the repercussions do not fall on the receptionist or the maintenance worker. They fall on the highest-ranking individual in the office — the General Counsel — because the tenant can compare the staff's accounts with the conclusions of a certified expert. Thus, I contacted Gary, the licensed technician. I included his phone number directly in the "You Have One More Day" letter. Consequently, every staff member who claimed to be an eyewitness became a simultaneous liar in the presence of a professional assessment. Their entire narrative crumbled the instant a genuine expert entered the scene.

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The risk associated with dishonesty is straightforward: if the tenant engages a licensed professional, every falsehood transforms into a documented falsehood. And when that occurs, the repercussions do not fall on the receptionist or the maintenance worker. They fall on the highest-ranking individual in the office — the General Counsel — because the tenant can compare the staff's accounts with the conclusions of a certified expert.

YOU HAVE ONE DAY. One day to take action. One day to acknowledge the truth. One day before the burden of accountability descended. And accountability was already looming. The CPPA allegations against COO F. Badbone and his vice president L. Trumpet exposed the decay lurking beneath the surface and if by chance you need full efficacy of my intent, ask F. Badbone who the hell Carol Denise Mitchell is. Their reckless release of confidential information—given in response to a fictitious advocate, Justine Simpson—served as evidence of their hubris. Evidence that they believed the system would shield them even as they betrayed it. But the system had encountered its equal. The Advocate was not a fabrication. I was tested from the moment my father left the household and my beloved grandmother died of cancer at age 51. I scaled boardrooms after being told my skin was too black for Bridgeway's clients. I ensured that management staff walked out of the California Insurance Appeals Board with the Master and the Slave in their hands! The Advocate was genuine. And the Advocate was me.

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Southgate Bend had long been neglecting its tenants until Carol Denise Mitchell and a single refrigerator became the second catalyst for holding South Gate accountable. I had already been engaged in a struggle against a significant entity, the Civil Rights Department, and emerging from the wet grounds of that advocacy were the issues surrounding the refrigerator once more. You will witness how a COO and his VP attempted to undermine me by responding to a fictitious advocate named Justine Simpson instead of addressing me directly. These high-ranking officials may have deceived tenants for decades, but they could not deceive me. My advocacy was extensive, sincere, and genuine. I understood how to press the right buttons, and when I assert that the phrase, "You have one Day!" originated from my core, I mean it. There were no edits, no pretenses. I was prepared to take Alisha Torres to the New York State Bar, and I was not joking. It is reasonable to conclude that COO F. Badbone and his VP had a discussion with Torres following the initiation of a CPPA investigation against this duo for transmitting my personal information to a fraudulent email, Justine Simpson, which I had created to determine whether this Southgate Bend COO was legitimate. To my astonishment, they chose to respond to a fictitious advocate rather than to me. This led to an investigation by the CPPA as follows: Let us first review the communication from the COO and his VP regarding Ms. Mitchell's broken refrigerator. Keep in mind these dictators are responding to a fake email that I created to see if they were real. This is their response!

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On Thursday, October 16, 2025 at 09:26:31 AM PDT,
Trumpet, L. lTrumpet@unrelated.com wrote:

Dear Ms. Trumpet

Thank you for your reply dated October 16, 2025, and for addressing the recent malfunction of the refrigerator by repairing it last week and providing a replacement on October 15, 2025. I apologize for the delayed response. However, I must convey my profound concern and dissatisfaction regarding the ongoing mistreatment and retaliation faced by Ms. Carol Denise Mitchell, a 70-year-old severely disabled resident of Southgate Bend. Had Related Management and its representatives, including Mr. Frank Badbone and Mr. Joe Lopes, taken our client's concerns seriously from the beginning—especially the sexual harassment incident involving Coby on September 7, 2024, and the subsequent breach of the Regional Manager's directive on October 16, 2024 (observed by their own activities director on December 12, 2024)—the pattern of retaliation, including the recent neglect of the refrigerator, could have been avoided. As her advocate, I plan to present this case, backed by comprehensive documentation, to Judge Moraga on March 27, 2026, in pursuit of a thorough resolution. I had sought permission from Ms. Mitchell to engage in a direct telephone conversation with you; however, she has declined this request, citing a lack of trust due to previous unresponsiveness. We appreciate your willingness to discuss this issue with our team and will continue to keep you informed in writing of our positions regarding the unlawful

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mistreatment of our client, with her consent, including the unresolved safety threat posed by Coby and the ongoing CRD investigation (Case #202412-27398913). As soon as we receive permission to speak with you about her case, we will contact you. Here is a Chain of Accountability Timeline that outlines the series of victories and the institutional failures I have highlighted during my tenancy at South Bend Senior Homes. It is organized for your understanding. Justine Simpson (The Fake Advocate) created to get a response from the COO and VP of South Bend Management

Sincerely,
Justine Simpson
Advocate for Seniors
advocate16justice@yahoo.com
(Co-Advocate: Zuri Muzema-Otter)

What's critical about this fake email is as follows. It was only generated to get a response from South Bend Management since they would not respond to me, the tenant. Here is South Bend's response to the fake advocate Justine Simpson.

On Thursday, October 16, 2025 at 09:26:31 AM PDT, Horn, Lori Trumpet@unrelated.com wrote:

Dear Ms. Simpson,

Mr. Badbone forwarded me your recent correspondence. I am Mr. Lope's direct supervisor and would like to speak with you regarding Ms. Mitchell's situation. Ms. Mitchell's refrigerator was repaired last week and a replacement refrigerator was provided yesterday afternoon.

Please let me know your availability for a phone call this afternoon or tomorrow.

CAROL DENISE MITCHELL

Thank you.

L. Trumpet (she/her/hers)
Senior Vice President, South Bend
L.Trumpet@unrelated.com
Office: 040 295 4033
Mobile: 310 003 4534

It was already troubling that the Civil Rights Department had discriminated against me in 2024/2025 due to this particular company; now, I found myself being undermined by the COO and his VP at South Bend Management, who disclosed personal information regarding my refrigerator to an unverified woman via a fraudulent email. This violation of privacy compelled me to bring this issue to the attention of the CPPA. First, I responded back to managements (breach of contract ordeal as follows)!

Sent: Thursday, October 16, 2025 at 07:47:49 PM PDT

Subject: Re: Ms. Mitchell's Situation – Case #202412-27398913

Dear Ms. Trumpet,

You were always speaking to Justine Simpson, the award-winning writer whose books are domiciled in the Library of Congress. Your response appears to be an inadvertent endorsement of my writing prowess—and for that, I thank you.

Now that I have your attention, let's talk. Not as advocate and executive, but as the real parties involved: Carol Denise Mitchell, the woman whose voice you've ignored for over a year, and the management team that chose silence over accountability.

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I created “Justine Simpson” to expose a truth: that your office responds not to the vulnerable, but to the illusion of authority. The fact that Mr. Badbone and your team replied to a fabricated advocate while disregarding my direct, documented communications is both telling and deeply troubling.

I am no longer asking for recognition—I am demanding resolution. The Civil Rights Division is aware of your pattern of non-responsiveness, and I am prepared to present this case, with extensive documentation, to Judge Moraga on March 27, 2026, (including this letter).

If South Bend Management is serious about restoring integrity and safety at South Bend, the first step is clear: terminate Mr. Lopes and Mandy, whose documented failures have enabled this ongoing abuse. I am not a woman to be dismissed. I am the voice you tried to silence. Now, I speak for myself.

Let's make a deal.

Sincerely,
Carol Denise Mitchell
cdmbooks@aol.com
000-000-0000

Author | Advocate | Resident of South Bend

I had been harangued by The Civil Rights Department and Sardenia, who were responsible for monitoring these issues related to the VP's involvement in this security breach. Here I stood as a 70-year-old woman battling against: VP Lopes, Manager Mandy, COO Badbone, his VP L. Trumpet, The Civil Rights Department, and Analyst Sardenia, all of whom were simultaneously infringing upon my rights, lying and trading information back and forth with

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everyone but me. Finally, I was able to report South Bend's management team to the CPPA and I received this letter. My advocacy for self-won!

November 3, 2025

Via Email (cdmbooks@aol.com)

RE: CCPA Complaint and Northgate Terrace Apartments, et al.

Dear Carol Denise Mitchell,

Thank you for submitting a sworn complaint to the California Privacy Protection Agency (Agency) on October 19, 2025. The Agency has completed a preliminary review of your complaint. This letter details the action the Agency has taken or plans to take, together with the reason for that action or nonaction. The Agency will be referring your complaint to the Enforcement Division for additional review. The Enforcement Division's additional review might result in a formal investigation based on the allegations contained within your complaint and further fact-finding. ***The Agency has taken this action because your complaint appears to raise at least one issue within the Agency's jurisdiction.*** The Agency may reach out to you again for additional information. The absence of a request for additional information does not indicate, one way or another, whether the Agency is investigating, and any requests for information might

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come later. We are unable to share further developments, as the Agency's investigations are generally confidential unless and until a matter becomes public through an enforcement action.

Please note that we cannot represent you, advocate for you with the business, or force the business to satisfy individual requests for relief. If you would like to consult an attorney, you can obtain a referral to a certified lawyer referral service through the State Bar at (866) 442-2529.

We appreciate hearing from concerned consumers such as yourself, and information submitted by consumers is an important tool in our enforcement efforts.

Thank you again for contacting the Agency.

Sincerely,

CALIFORNIA PRIVACY PROTECTION AGENCY

Complaints Unit

Ultimately, I succeeded in achieving a victory that demonstrates how resilience and self-advocacy rely on meticulous attention to detail and honesty. Despite facing formidable opponents, I, am an elderly writer in a wheelchair, aged 70 and enduring pain, persevered until justice was ultimately served. My advice to fellow tenants is to never lose hope. When you are in the right, there will inevitably be an impartial institution willing to investigate the

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situation and hold key individuals accountable for their actions. This experience inspired me to write this book. Be truthful. Maintain thorough records. Document everything and do not allow anyone to intimidate you. Even giants must eventually rest! I am the advocate!

Chain of Accountability Timeline

Subject: Refrigerator Defect – Notice of Professional Diagnosis and Intent to Report

I have repeatedly notified management in writing of the refrigerator leak and unsafe food/medication storage. Despite these notices, management has failed to act.

On **December 10, 2025 at approximately 2:00 PM**, I spoke with **Gary (510-000-0000)**, a licensed appliance repair technician. Gary immediately identified the likely cause: a **freezer drain issue**. He advised that the unit should be defrosted and rested with doors open for 24 hours, and that further inspection may be required to confirm the defect.

This professional input confirms what I have documented all along: the refrigerator is defective and unsafe.

Reiteration of Request

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I again demand that management immediately repair or replace the refrigerator. Habitability requires safe food and medication storage, and your continued refusal places me at risk.

Pattern of Harm

- **Chang Li** investigated and misrepresented facts.
- **Marcel** and office staff dismissed my concerns, intentionally causing harm.
- Management has denied the defect despite clear evidence.
- It took a licensed professional, Gary, to reasonably explain the problem.

Counsel's Role

Attorney Ms. Conteras has received my letters and has ill-advised her clients by encouraging denial and retaliation instead of compliance with California law. This constitutes dereliction of duty.

Notice of Escalation

If this refrigerator is not repaired or replaced within **two (2) days**, I will report Attorney General Conteras to the California State Bar for misconduct. I will also continue to escalate this matter with APS, HUD OIG, and the courts.

This is your final opportunity to comply

Sincerely, **Carol Denise Mitchell** Unit 1118 |
cdmbooks@aol.com

Letter Response – Huge win for the Advocate

The Next day Response
Good morning, Ms. Mitchell.

CAROL DENISE MITCHELL

Thanks for your email. After multiple inspections by our maintenance tech and staff members, we did not find any source of leak or malfunction with the current unit.

However, to ensure your comfort and peace of mind, we have decided to ***replace the refrigerator with a brand new one***. We can have our staff replace it today. Please let us know you're availability so we can proceed with the installation.

Let us know if you have any questions.

Manager, South Gate Bend
Area Manager
Unrelated Affordable

Chain of Accountability (continued)

✦ The Refrigerator Crisis (“ONE MORE DAY”)

- Trigger: Threat to escalate to the New York Bar if habitability was not restored.
- Outcome: General Counsel acted decisively; South Bend’s manager tendered resignation (effective Dec. 26).
- Lesson: Habitability laws are non-negotiable—failure to act swiftly can cost careers.

✦ Misrepresentation & Cover-Up

- Actor: Chang Li stood in and misrepresented the refrigerator situation.
- Outcome: Exposure of negligence and dishonesty; likely fallout for VP Lopes as collateral damage.
- Lesson: Substituting truth with lies only accelerates accountability.

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✚ September 5 Sexual Harassment Case

- Trigger: Case dropped under pressure, but documented as unresolved misconduct.
- Outcome: Added weight to South Bend's manager's removal and broader scrutiny of management practices.
- Lesson: Even "dropped" cases remain part of the accountability record.

✚ Civil Rights Department Failure

- Actor: Analyst Sardenia misrepresented case details, sharing projected closing date with VP Lopes.
- Outcome: Department of Justice opened investigation, citing times, dates, and failures of magnitude.
- Lesson: Procedural betrayal is itself a civil rights violation; escalation to DOJ proves persistence pays.

✚ Tenant Victory

- Pattern: Each battle—appliance, harassment, misrepresentation—led to exposure, resignation, or investigation.
- Outcome: A cumulative record of wins, exhausting but undeniable.
- Lesson: Tenants can transform "small" issues into systemic accountability through persistence and documentation.

You Got One More Day

South Bend Senior Homes was inevitably going to face casualties as indicated in the previously mentioned timeline. South Bend simply cannot leave well-enough alone, as if being investigated

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by the Consumer Protection Agency wasn't enough. I was battling them from the COO up to the General Counsel, and this old woman continued to win! Incompetence and deceit have no place in the management of senior living facilities. There was no way that South Bend's administration would permit lower-level staff to undermine a tenant's rights to such an extent that the tenant would threaten the legal license of the General Counsel. It is evident that when a refrigerator issue escalates to such a degree, someone in the upper management will have to take responsibility. I hope that this refrigerator issue and its outcomes serve as a reminder to everyone to simply adhere to the law: AB 628 has officially redefined what constitutes a rental property as "legally habitable" in California, and it now includes something one might assume was already mandated: a functioning refrigerator. Starting January 1, 2025, California Civil Code §1941.1 mandates that all rental properties must provide: A working refrigerator; a functioning permanent or built-in oven with a stovetop. Landlords have until January 1, 2026, to ensure that every rental unit complies with these requirements. This is no longer a matter of choice. Refrigerators can no longer be presented as a "courtesy"; they are now a legal necessity, even if your lease states otherwise. This law is applicable to single-family homes; condos and townhomes; and multi-family units. The only exception? Short-term vacation rentals. For all other cases, AB 628 is applicable. This means tenants have the right to withhold rent; they can utilize "repair and deduct" to address the issue themselves and bill you for

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it; you may face code enforcement actions; it could delay new leases or instigate tenant disputes; and you might encounter legal claims. Please be advised: Under AB 628, it is prohibited to hold the tenant accountable for repairs or replacements. You are no longer permitted to offer appliances on an "as-is" basis or permit tenants to supply their own refrigerator. Any lease provisions that seek to transfer this responsibility are now rendered invalid under California law. Refrigerator and habitability failures weren't the only problems facing South Bend Senior Homes!

Notice to Alisha Torres Subject

Notice of Intent to Report to New York State Bar Dear Ms. Torres, As the Associate General Counsel for Fair Housing at Related Management Company, you have been included in previous correspondence from the Civil Rights Department as well as communications regarding the recertification of Southgate Bend. Despite this documented awareness, management has not acknowledged or addressed my repeated requests for a functioning refrigerator, which is a fundamental obligation under California tenant law. In my previous communication, I clearly stated that if Southgate Bend continued to disregard its contractual obligations, I would escalate the matter. I hereby reaffirm that commitment. If immediate corrective action is not taken, I will report your involvement to the New York State Bar, where you are currently registered, to document this neglect and ensure accountability. This notice is not intended to be personal; it is part of my permanent

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record advocating for seniors who are experiencing systemic neglect. Your position as counsel directly connects you to this issue, and your lack of response will be recorded as part of the ongoing pattern of awareness and intentional non-response.



CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Carol Denise Mitchell

MY PROFESSIONAL WRITING LEGACY

My professional legacy encompasses two archives, two Readers Favorite Book Awards, an Honorable Mention for "Michael Jackson: The Love He Saved," and a RAD Hero Award. As an Indie Writer, I successfully maintained my unique voice while entering the publishing industry, ensuring it remained uncompromised. The prospect of writing for contracts and financial gain never appealed to me, as my voice has always been shaped by the needs of my readers rather than my own. My advocacy has been driven by the pursuit of education, inspiration, and accessible resources for the elderly, impoverished, and disenfranchised, reinforcing the importance of my voice remaining uncompromised. Here is further information regarding my professional writing legacy. Let us please begin with an important Library of Congress induction for Ms. Mitchell

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Carol Denise Mitchell is included in A Celebration of Women Writers, a literary archive originally curated by Mary Mark Ockerbloom and hosted by the University of Pennsylvania. The entire archive — including Mitchell's author listing — was formally preserved by the Library of Congress as part of its Web Archiving Program. The Library of Congress record (LC Control Number: lcwaN0004173) documents the archive's capture across multiple years, ensuring permanent access to the authors and works it contains. Mitchell's inclusion places her among a curated list of women writers whose contributions were deemed culturally and historically significant enough to warrant national preservation.

FACTS & NUMBERS

1. Archive Name

A Celebration of Women Writers

2. Curator / Founder

Mary Mark Ockerbloom

(An early digital-literature pioneer; her work is now preserved by the Library of Congress.)

3. Host Institution

University of Pennsylvania Digital Library4. Library of Congress Record

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- LC Control Number: lcwaN0004173
- Repository: Library of Congress Web Archive
- Archived Years: 2001–2016
- Preservation Scope: Entire domain (all author listings included)

“My work is preserved in the Library of Congress through A Celebration of Women Writers, a curated archive of historically significant women authors. My listing appears in the same preserved collection as Margaret Mitchell, placing my voice within a national literary record.”

About Mary Mark Ockerbloom

Mary Mark Ockerbloom was a respected digital librarian and literary scholar. Her work on A Celebration of Women Writers was groundbreaking — she created one of the earliest comprehensive online archives of women’s literature. The Library of Congress preserved her work because of its cultural and historical value.

Caring About Restoring Our Lives was preserved in the Glendale Public Library, located in Glendale, Arizona, serving as a resource guide for the homeless who are unable to navigate the streets with bundles of paper. The moment when the Glendale Public Library, in Glendale, Arizona, officially archived my work for the homeless, it was one of the most significant achievements of my life. Below are details of some of my most esteemed honors, starting

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with CAROL. Caring About Restoring Our Lives. It is archived as follows:

*****CARING ABOUT RESTORING OUR LIVES**

ARCHIVED: 2021 Glendale Public Library, Glendale, AR.

Author: Mitchell, Carol D. Title: Caring About Restoring Our Lives / Carol D. Mitchell. Publisher, Date: Middletown, DE: (unknown), 2021. Description: 147 pages; 23 cm. Series: Arizona Authors. Subjects: Homelessness -- United States. Homeless persons -- Services for. Homeless persons -- United States. ISBN: 9781687393982 System Availability: 2 Current Holds: 0 Local Items: 2 System Items: 2 Control Number: 659428 Call Number: 362.5 M681c Course Reserves: 0

***** WHAT HAPPENED TO SUZY**

ARCHIVED: 1995 Library of Congress, Washington, DC.,

This is my very first work. What happened to Suzy chronicles my life growing up in Pomona, California from 1966-1977. This book advocates for the well-being of all children throughout the nation. It is an esteemed novel honored and archived by the nation's Library of Congress.

Library of Congress Catalog: What Happened to Suzy Permalink: <https://lccn.loc.gov/95171506> Personal name: Simms, Carol Denise. Main title: What Happened to Suzy / Carol Denise Simms. Published/Created: New York: Carlton Press Corp., c1995. Description: xii, 202 p.; 23 cm. ISBN: 0806250135 CALL NUMBER: PS3569.I4785 W47 1995 FT MEADE Copy 1 Request

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in: Jefferson or Adams Building Reading Rooms - STORED
OFFSITE

Carol Denise Mitchell's works span decades, beginning with *Suzy* in the 1980s–1990s and continuing through more than forty published titles. Her catalog reflects resilience, truth-telling, and advocacy across memoir, crime fiction, and cultural narratives.

1980s–1990s: Foundations

What Happened to Suzy (Carlton Press, 1994) — Written in the 1980s–1990s, published in 1994, and cataloged in the Library of Congress.

Early drafts and manuscripts that established Mitchell's voice as a writer of truth and survival.

2000s: Expanding Themes

Maxine — A powerful narrative of resilience and justice.

Ruthless Pamela Jean — Crime fiction exploring betrayal and survival.

Interrupted — A story of disruption and endurance.

Unworthy — A narrative of struggle and redemption.

2010s: Series & Advocacy

The Mad Sister — Mercy J. Diamond's descent into madness and rise as a Yale-trained doctor.

The Mad Sister 2 — Continuing Mercy's journey through resilience and brilliance.

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The Mad Sister 3: Massacre at Boulder Pond — A dramatic extension of the saga.

Debi Thomas: What Really Happened — Biographical exploration of the Olympic skater's life.

Your Rights: What Employers Do Not Want You to Know — Advocacy writing empowering workers.

Readers Favorite Book Awards:

 **Carol Denise Mitchell — Verified Awards (Chronological Order)**

2011 — Readers' Favorite Book Award

Work honored: What Happened to Suzy -2011

Recognized for its message of healing and hope.

Readers' Favorite Award

Work honored: Ruthless Pamela Jean-2022

Listed as a Readers' Favorite Award-winning title.

July 13, 2021 — #1 Kindle Unlimited Bestseller

Work honored: Noah, True Love Never Dies

Reached #1 on Kindle Unlimited, marking a major milestone in your career.

Additional Honors

June 21, 2023 — Bay Area Resilience and Determination (RAD) Hero Award

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Awarded by the Alameda County Advisory Board / Health Care for the Homeless Community Consumer Advisory Board.

✦ Legacy Statement/Michael Jackson Book Review

Carol Denise Mitchell's catalog is permanent, spanning memoir, crime fiction, biography, and advocacy. From *Suzzy* to *The Advocate*, her works are preserved in national archives, recognized in public discourse, and celebrated by readers worldwide.

Michal Jackson The Love He Saved, 2010

FIRST BOOK WRITTEN ON MICHAEL AFTER HIS DEATH.

CDMBooks Carol Denise Mitchell:

Readersfavorite: Book Review



Reviewed by Anne Boling for Readers' Favorite

Frankie Mae Tyson was deeply in love. She had cherished her feelings for Michael Jackson for as long as she could recall, always dreaming of the day they would meet. One afternoon, while driving along the Santa Monica freeway, 20-year-old Frankie spotted a large, extravagant limousine. There was no doubt in her mind that it belonged to Michael Jackson. They exchanged flirtatious glances as they cruised down the highway. Frankie Mae had never been one of the popular girls. Throughout her school years, the boys had teased her; however, Michael Jackson had seen her photograph in a

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vacant store window prior to their meeting and perceived the ordinary girl in a unique way. He genuinely cared for her. She reciprocated his feelings, and together they successfully maintained the secrecy of their relationship from the outside world. His love for her was sincere. After meeting Jackson, she gained self-confidence and made it clear from the outset that all she desired was his affection. For many years, Frankie resisted Michael's efforts to liberate her from her impoverished surroundings. Both Michael and Frankie took great care to keep their romance hidden from Oprah and the public, as Michael employed doubles to disguise his whereabouts when he was with his secret love, Frankie Mae. He even surprised her one day by attending her Security Guard of the Month Award ceremony just hours before his iconic Moonwalk performance on Motown 25. "As Michael observed me through a peephole that day, I felt immense pride for his unwavering support, while I was astonished by the relentless determination of opportunists and the media to undermine Michael Jackson." "Loving a man as profoundly as I love Michael makes the experience of death feel surreal. I refuse to take my own life; instead, I will live in honor of Michael Jackson. I have no fears, for he knows I will join him one day, as I have promised." Upon starting to read *The Love He Saved*, I reflected on whether it was based on real events. Although this book is a work of fiction, it possesses a nonfiction-like quality. Initially, I found Frankie's language somewhat bothersome, as it tended to lean towards street slang. Nevertheless, this choice of language is essential as it effectively shapes the

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character. While on the surface author Carol Denise Mitchell appears to be writing about Jackson, this book is actually a character I perceive two possibilities within this book:

1. Frankie Mae genuinely encountered Jackson and maintained a relationship with him for several years. After all, he was an extraordinary individual who consistently acted in unconventional and surprising manners.

2. Frankie Mae was so infatuated with Jackson that she devoted years to fantasizing about him. In her imagination, they truly shared a relationship.

I suspect the author will appreciate that she has prompted me to ponder and analyze to this extent. Frankie Mae's fixation on Jackson constitutes the most credible aspect of this narrative. Carol Mitchell is a skilled author, and her characters are remarkably lifelike. Keep in mind the name Carol Denise Mitchell.



CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

The Advocate Wins

Chapter Northgate Terrace Victory

Carol Mitchell's Victory for *Northgate Terrace Apartments* Author Carol Denise Mitchell is a global writing star and she cares about justice for all. A Significant Triumph for Seniors Bay Area Author and Advocate Carol Denise Mitchell Initiates Historic Safety Reform at Northgate Terrace Apartments By: Carol Denise Mitchell CDMBOOKS

OAKLAND, Calif. - Oct. 26, 2025 - PR Log -- Oakland, CA — After years of tenant vulnerability and silence, renowned author and justice advocate Carol Denise Mitchell has secured a groundbreaking victory at *Northgate Terrace Apartments*: the installation of security cameras on all 11 floors for the first time in the building's history. This comprehensive reform follows Ms. Mitchell's tireless advocacy after she filed a harassment complaint in 2024. Her efforts revealed systemic neglect, unauthorized entries, and retaliatory practices — resulting in genuine accountability and visible change. "Before I arrived, there were no cameras. Now, every floor is protected. Tenants tell me, 'You're the reason we feel safe.'

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That's a win for all of us," stated Mitchell. In one documented incident, Cora Fung, Northgate's Activities Director, observed the alleged harasser on Ms. Mitchell's floor — in direct violation of a written directive issued by Regional Manager Analisa Anthony on October 16, 2024. Subsequently, in an unsolicited moment of acknowledgment, Fung approached Mitchell and remarked, "The reason they're placing cameras on all floors is because of you, Carol. Thank you." Other tenants, including longtime resident Delores, expressed similar gratitude. In a display of grace and strategic foresight, Ms. Mitchell will withdraw her small claims case against Northgate Terrace Apartments on Monday, citing recent improvements, *shortcomings of the Civil Rights Department*, and the respectful treatment by property manager Chang Li, who promptly restored her cold water on October 25 following a personal call. "One act of kindness can shift everything. Mr. Yee's response demonstrated to me that change is possible — and that dignity still matters," Mitchell added. Although the small claims case will be dismissed, Ms. Mitchell...is pleased that the seniors residing in her building are now safer. Carol Denise Mitchell, an award-winning author and public figure (Miss Congeniality 1973), is a passionate advocate for justice. Her literary contributions and activism converge to foster emotional reckoning and drive social change. Additional achievements. Throughout her advocacy efforts, Carol Denise Mitchell has secured approximately \$300,000 in victories for seniors and tenants, a sum that illustrates both the financial significance and the human impact of her endeavors. By demanding

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institutional accountability and achieving safety enhancements, such as the installation of 22 security cameras at Northgate Terrace, Mitchell's successes are not merely symbolic — they are quantifiable, tangible, and transformative. Each achievement contributes to an expanding record of justice established through determination, thorough documentation, and bravery.

Appendix: Settlements and Outcomes

Major Case Settlements Results Northgate Terrace Cameras
(11) Floors Itemized Cost Estimate

(Professional Format) 1. Hardware Costs (Cameras)
Average cost per commercial-grade camera (installed): \$125–\$450
each Estimated hardware total for 22 cameras: Low estimate: $22 \times \$125 = \$2,750$ High estimate: $22 \times \$450 = \$9,900$ •

Dr. Norman Case (settled by John Winer) — \$100,000

CUIAB Settlement — \$34,000

Bridgeway Settlement — \$40,000 + one year COBRA coverage

Additional Advocacy Wins • Mary Chandler (Overtime, Office Team) — \$35,000 • Michelle Wood (Flint's Barbeque) — \$2,000 Overall Impact South Bend - Terrace (settled by CD Mitchell) – Cameras on all floors at South Bend Terrace 55,000 – 65,000 • Total Known Settlement Outcomes: **≈ \$300,000**

Jobs Saved in Overtime: • Numerous cases where employees retained positions and wages due to advocacy. Note: There were times attorneys refused to take my cases.

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“Just because you didn’t stat out perfect doesn’t mean you can’t have an excellent result in the end. I want people to know when I am taking care of them, I’ll give it all that I got” – Debi Thomas

THE RAD HERO AWARD — THE FINAL STAND

On June 21, 2023, during a Solstice gathering organized by the Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless Community/Consumer Advisory Board, I was honored with the Resilience and Determination (RAD) Hero Award. This accolade acknowledged "the energy, effort, and inspiration she provided to those around her," a statement that reflected not only my advocacy but also the years spent entering courtrooms, institutions, and systems that were never intended to embrace me. What the audience was unaware of that day was that it would be the final occasion I would ever stand. The moment was not one of tragedy. It was a celebration of triumph. My legs had supported me through every struggle — every hearing, every confrontation, every step of the arduous journey toward justice and into a battle of "You Have One More Day!" They sustained me through the most challenging years of my existence. And on that Solstice afternoon, they carried me one last time, just long enough to accept the recognition I had rightfully earned. I remember my friend Debi's voice, "What's wrong with your legs?" A brilliant mind. An Olympic Gold Medalist with remarkable talent and intellect had foreseen this fate years prior. I thought of her as I accepted the award. The seriousness of my condition was recognized by Dr. Debi Thomas — an Olympic medalist, surgeon, and friend — who perceived what others had overlooked. She instantly grasped what my body had been enduring.

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Her presence at that moment became a subtle turning point, a private acknowledgment that the struggle had exacted its toll. However, the RAD Hero Award was not a symbol of decline. It represented culmination. It signified the conclusion of an era — the closing of a chapter in which I stood, both literally and figuratively, for myself and for others. When I took my seat after receiving the award, it was not an act of defeat. It was a moment of completion. The mantle of advocacy, carried for so long, had reached its fulfillment.



CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Your Resources

The Advocate Resources Page

Hope Hotline: 1-888-995-4673 offers free counseling, while HUD Exchange provides assistance for homelessness and housing needs. Additionally, the Eldercare Locator can be reached at 1-800-677-1116 for services available nationwide. Furthermore, consider exploring HUD's Section 202 for affordable housing options for seniors, as well as local legal aid organizations that assist with tenant rights issues. Government and Community Hotlines: Dial 2-1-1 from either a cell phone or landline, or visit the 211 websites. This service links you to local social service agencies, which include those that provide emergency rental assistance, utility support, and various housing-related resources tailored to your area. Legal Aid/Legal Services: Nonprofit organizations offer free or low-cost legal advice and representation concerning housing issues for low-income individuals, often giving priority to seniors. To find assistance, search for "Legal Aid for Seniors" along with your city or county.

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Alternatively, you may reach out to your local Area Agency on Aging for referrals. CCOA: Contact: ccoa@cco.ca.gov Phone: 916-419-7591 The California Commission on Aging acts as the primary advocate for older individuals in the state, which includes, but is not limited to, providing advisory input on all legislative considerations.

Institute on Aging Friendship Line A 24/7 Lifeline for Older Adults and Caregivers Experiencing Isolation, Stress, or Loneliness 888-670-1360 Established over 50 years ago, the Institute on Aging's Friendship Line is the only accredited 24-hour toll-free emotional support line in the nation for older adults, seniors, caregivers, and individuals with disabilities.

Causa Justa: Just Cause 3022 International Blvd. Suite 210 (office) & Suite 205 (clinic) Oakland, CA 94601 Telephone: 510-763-5877 Website: <https://cjjc.org/> Email: info@cjjc.org A nonprofit organization committed to advocating for and promoting the rights of California tenants to ensure safe, decent, and affordable housing.

Centro Legal de la Raza 3022 International Blvd. Suite 410 Oakland, CA 94601 Drop-in Clinic: Every 2nd Thursday, 9 - 11 am, Eastmont Library Drop-in Clinic: Every 3rd Thursday, 10 am - 12 noon, West Oakland Library Telephone: 510-437-1554 Website: <https://www.centrolegal.org/>

Centro Legal de la Raza is a legal services organization dedicated to protecting and promoting the rights of low-income, immigrant, and Latino communities through bilingual legal representation, education, and advocacy.

By integrating high-quality legal services with know-your-rights education and youth development, Centro Legal guarantees that individuals are informed and empowered. access to justice for thousands of individuals throughout Northern and Central California.

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Note: Sharing is vital because it builds connection, trust and community. You are no longer by yourself in the journey to seek justice and fairness. Work in teams and celebrate boosting your well-being. There is so much joy in helping others reach their goals.

Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach

1121 Mission Street

San Francisco, CA 94103

And 310 8th Street -Suite 308

Oakland, CA 94607 **Telephone:** (415) 567-6255 and (510) 251-2846

Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach was founded to promote the development, empowerment, and self-reliance of the community through the provision of culturally competent and linguistically appropriate legal, social, and educational services to those with extraordinary needs. Through these community-based services, API Legal Outreach works to break the cycle of violence against women, youth and seniors, to advocate for the rights of immigrants and those with disabilities, to promote the dignity and independence of seniors and advocate for the basic rights such as affordable housing and the rights of tenants.

East Bay Community Law Center 1950 University Ave. Suite 200 Berkeley, CA 94703 2921 Adeline St. Berkeley, CA 94703 (between Ashby and Russell St) Telephone: 510-548-4040 Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00am-5:00pm Website: <https://ebclc.org> Email: info@ebclc.org The center offers counseling and assistance with legal paperwork specifically for low-income tenants. Additionally, it provides FREE community workshops for low-income tenants who are experiencing disputes with their landlords.

Eviction Defense Center 350 Frank Ogawa Plaza - Suite 703 Oakland, CA 94612 Telephone: 510-452-4541 Hotline: 510-693-2775 (Accepts text messages & After Hours) Hours: Mon/Tues/Thurs 9:00am-5:00pm & Wed/Fri 9:00am-4:00pm; Closed 12:00pm-2:00pm Daily

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Please take note: Share these resources with your family and friends to obtain the assistance you require and rightfully deserve. I have gathered numerous resources that I could find in order to support you and facilitate access to these valuable tools. Enjoy, and best of luck!

Tenants Together 474 Valencia St #156 San Francisco, CA 94103 (No Drop-in Services) Telephone: 415-495-8100 Website: <http://www.tenants-together.org/> Email: info@tenants-together.org A nonprofit organization committed to defending and promoting the rights of tenants in California, ensuring access to safe, decent, and affordable housing.

Oakland Tenants Union P.O. Box 10573 Oakland, CA 94601 Telephone: 510-704-5276 Email: help@oaklandtenantsunion.org A volunteer-driven referral and resource organization comprised of housing activists focused on safeguarding tenants' rights and interests. Alameda County Social Services Agency Housing and Homeless Services Website: <https://www.alamedacountysocialservices.org/our-services/Shelter-and-Housing/index> The Alameda County Social Services Agency offers cash assistance or housing vouchers to families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness within the county.

Season of Sharing (SOS) Telephone: 510-272-3700 Website: <https://www.alamedacountysocialservices.org/our-services/Shelter-and-Housing/Other-Support/season-of-sharing> The SOS program in the county is a private fund that offers one-time crisis-based support for housing and essential family needs to residents of Alameda County. Grants are awarded not only based on the fulfillment of specific criteria but also on merit and the level of need. It is important to note that assistance is not guaranteed. For further details, please call the automated pre-screening phone number or visit the program's website.

Bay Area Legal Aid-Alameda County Office 1735 Telegraph Ave Oakland, CA 94612 Telephone: 510-663-4755 | Legal Advice Line: 800-551-5554 Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00am-5:00pm; Closed

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12:00pm-1:00pm Website: <https://baylegal.org/> This organization provides legal information and assistance to individuals with low income. Tenants may obtain help in various areas, including: Evictions, Housing Discrimination, Terminations, Disputes, Unsafe or unhealthy housing conditions, Lock-outs, Utility shut-offs, and issues related to foreclosed properties.

There's More!

Alameda County Bar Association Volunteer Legal Services Corporation (VLSC) 1000 Broadway Suite 290 Oakland, CA 94607 Telephone: 510-302-2222. Option 4 Website: <https://www.acbanet.org/pro-bono-legal-services/> Email: membershipassistant@acbanet.org The low-income Landlord Eviction Assistance clinic is the only free legal clinic in Alameda County that is exclusively focused on assisting property owners.

East Bay Rental Housing Association 3664 Grand Ave Suite B Oakland, CA 94610 Telephone: 510-893-9873 Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00am-5:00pm (Closed for lunch from 12:30pm-1:30pm) Website: <https://www.ebrha.com> Email: news@ebrha.com EBRHA is a comprehensive nonprofit organization committed to fostering fair, safe, and well-maintained residential rental housing that adheres to local regulations and state/federal laws. We provide our rental property owner and manager members with city-specific and timely education, personalized property management advice, complimentary rental forms, networking opportunities, and advocacy at both the state and local levels.

EBRHA supports our members, neighbors, and local businesses through community improvement and sustainability initiatives. Local Organizations Offering Assistance to Tenants and Property Owners SEEDS Community Resolution Center 2530 San Pablo Ave Suite A Berkeley, CA 94702 Telephone: 510-548-2377 Fax: 510-548-4051 Website: <https://www.seedscrc.org/> Email: casedeveloper@seedscrc.org Hours: Monday-Thursday 9:00am-5:00pm Offers mediation, facilitation, and training services. Mediation sessions can be scheduled within 10 to 14 business days

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after all parties complete an intake process via phone. The cost is \$75 per party for each mediation session, with a sliding scale available. No one is denied service due to financial constraints.

Housing and Economic Rights Advocates (HERA) 1814 Franklin St Suite 1040 Oakland, CA 94612 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 29435, Oakland, CA 94604 Telephone: 510-271-8443 (Appointment Only) Fax: 510-868-4521 Website: <https://www.heraca.org/> Email: inquiries@heraca.org HERA advocates for affordable and equitable access to credit, as well as asset development and preservation. The organization combats abusive mortgage servicing practices, issues related to homeowner associations, foreclosure, escrow, and various homeowner challenges, predatory lending in all its forms, and discrimination within financial services and consumer transactions. HERA offers financial counseling to individuals and conducts community education workshops. It also provides training for service providers and other professionals. The organization translates the experiences and needs of clients into policy initiatives. HERA collaborates with a diverse array of partners throughout the state and nation to create positive outcomes for at-risk residents.

Local Organizations Offering Support to Seniors Legal Assistance for Seniors 333 Hegenberger Rd Suite 850 Oakland, CA 94621 Telephone: 510-832-3040 Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00am-5:00pm (Call for an Appointment) Website: <https://www.lashicap.org> Email: las@lashicap.org Berkeley East Bay Gray Panthers Telephone: 510-842-6224 Hours: Wednesday 1:30pm-4:00pm

East Bay Gray Panthers have always been involved in progressive politics demonstrating for justice, civil rights, for the homeless, housing affordability, climate change, the environment and against war. Age and Youth in Action. Serves Berkeley, CA, Albany, CA, Emeryville, CA, Oakland, CA, Richmond, CA, El Cerrito, CA, Alameda, CA, San Leandro, CA and nearby areas

Asian Pacific Environmental Network 426 17th St #500 Oakland, CA 94612 and 1200 Harrison St Oakland, CA 94607

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Telephone: (510) 834-8920 and (510) 593-2283 Website: <https://apen4ej.org/> Email: apen@apen4ej.org By fostering a well-organized movement, APEN aims to instigate essential transformations within economic and social institutions that will prioritize the public good over profit motives and uphold the right of every individual to a decent, safe, and affordable quality of life, as well as the right to engage in decisions that impact our lives. APEN envisions environmental justice for all individuals. The focus of APEN's efforts is on Asian immigrant and refugee communities.

Fundamental Reasons for Sharing: Establishes Connection and Trust: By sharing our thoughts, emotions, and belongings, we demonstrate vulnerability and trust, which fosters deeper relationships and a sense of community. Alleviates Loneliness: Sharing helps us understand that we are not alone in our challenges or happiness, affirming our experiences and diminishing feelings of isolation. Encourages Growth: We acquire fresh perspectives, learn from one another, and collaboratively navigate challenges, promoting personal growth.

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Contact Local Housing Advocacy Organizations | City of Oakland, CA

Historic Jamestowne

<https://historicjamestowne.org>

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